

PORTRAITS IN DEVELOPMENT: THE SCIENCE, ART, AND PHILOSOPHY OF  
CREATING WHAT IS FOUND

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## **Abstract**

The study of human development can be said to begin from the thought of how an infant becomes a self over time out of instinct and fantasy life with the help of a maternal other. In this way, development is also a question of what is made from the human fact of dependence. The other must think the self's dependency, meet its demands with care, and then fail in the meeting of needs so there can be disillusionment, desire, re-illusionment, and the dream of a shared reality. D.W. Winnicott insists that for the baby to become someone she must create an object that is there waiting to be found, her first not-Me possession—the breast, the bottle, the blanket, the teddy bear, etc. The maternal other, Winnicott maintains, must accept the baby's object without resolving the paradoxical quality of this transitional sway between apperception and perception.

My dissertation studies human development from and between the paradox of creating what is found in infancy mirrored by the creative dilemmas of cultural experience in adulthood to examine how the adult's scientific, artistic, and philosophical projects bear witness to the development of a desire to be as reflective modalities for understanding self, other, and the realities internal and external to each. My study reconstructs three portraits of the emotional world and creative ideas of an exemplary figure—the scientist, Marie Curie, the artist, James Joyce, and the philosopher, Jacques Derrida—as cases for thought on the developmental tasks, respectively, of making contact with reality, symbol formation, and the achievement of a capacity for doubts about the self. I explore character development as a means of thinking human development, where crises of subjectivity give representational valence to emotional growth, to engage how one makes from human development a story of creative living.

*For MaPa*

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Creating What is Found, or That Which is Called Human Development**

#### **1.1 A Paradox in Development**

My interest in the study of development began as a teaching assistant for a course on child development and health for student teachers. I was intrigued by the confusion and anxiety that ideas and questions of development caused in the students. The worry seemed to center on what I interpreted as a troubling proposition: Who we are is also constituted by what came before us and so it is difficult to know whether the roots of developmental dilemmas are natural or nurtured, that is to say, in another register, biological or socially constructed, or again, discovered or created.

The students' discussions of development in tutorial became fixed around what they saw as an originary and enduring antinomy between the human's natural, biological, physical, empirical, and individual conditions, on the one hand, and the nurtured, social, psychological, ideal, and relational conditions, on the other. I began to wonder why it is so hard to imagine the dynamics between these categories without dividing them into separate spheres of experience, to accept nature, for instance, as a nurtured condition, or to see how nurturing might also be said to be in our nature. Let's assume, I repeated in tutorial and in the margins of assignments, that a decision on the question of nature or nurture is impossible, or at least unproductive for our course: How else can we sustain our interest in the meaning of human development for ourselves and others? Can the study of human development raise questions, not of knowledge, but of meaning, and so be understood as composing human narratives as well as aetiologies? With much resistance, the students held fast to the conviction that development matters only insofar

as it can answer questions over causality: What am I responsible for as far as my development is concerned? What are others responsible for? Their anxiety also referenced the uncertain relationship waiting for them in the teaching profession between aetiological knowledge about students and a corresponding access to resources designed to meet student needs. We eventually had to leave suspended our question as to whether we must discover or can create our understanding of development and think together about development otherwise.

I asked myself: Can that which is called human development refer, among other things, to a process of experience whereby an individual gets to know and reflect upon the life-world of her mind? The study of development often directs attention to matters of biology or neurology, to the measurable stages and inexorable materialities of embodiment. There is avoidance even of the term “development” in educational theory or in humanities research for its association to linearity and normativity regarding the human condition of growth and change. As I was deliberating on these questions, I came across a fascinating discussion of development in *Playing and Reality* (2005) by British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. Winnicott opens his theory of development from the paradox that for a baby to become someone she must create and discover an object (the breast, the bottle, the teddy bear, the blanket etc.,) simultaneously. He argues that the baby creates and discovers the world of others and objects in and through a primary relation to what he calls a “transitional object”. Winnicott clarifies that for the baby the object is both Me and not-Me at the same time, and goes on to become her first not-Me possession. The baby claims the object as part of herself, created because wanted, but also as part of an outside, a not-Me element, which is found because needed. She makes



these two claims simultaneously. The claims are contradictory—this is me; this is mine (not-me)—and taken together comprise a paradoxical scene in which both are true from the point of view of the infant. The maternal other, Winnicott goes on, accepts this paradoxical proposition for the sake of the baby’s development, facilitating an environment in which the baby can have it both ways concomitantly. In his acceptance without resolution of this paradox Winnicott sees the prototype for the human’s creative projects throughout life, from social, political and cultural experience to scientific, artistic and philosophical thought. Within Winnicott’s theoretical frame, changes and conflicts in development are related to the fundamental problem of meaning, of how our living conditions are also stories and histories not only of how we became selves in the first place, but also of how we become selves only in and through a signifying relation to a maternal other who holds us together at the start.

From the rather rigid signifiers of Nature and Nurture that populated the fantasies and debates in a tutorial on human development, and burdening the lively minds of anxious students who see the educator as a court clerk for Natural laws, I arrived at a complex and playful theory of the developmental relationality between creation and discovery. I saw in Winnicott’s work a primary research question: Can we think of human development as a problem of meaning and as a self-questioning narrative that hinges on one’s relation to the other? For Winnicott the study of development begins from the thought of the originary relation between maternal other and baby. Winnicott grapples with a delicate balance here in that the term “baby” also refers to the maternal other’s mind, her ideas about a baby, and to her attitude and capacity to give and take where the baby’s need and dependence are absolute at the start of life and only gradually

translated into relative independence. This delicate balance between need and interdependence gives the terms for a further proposition: The subject of development is a relational subject premised upon a capacity to dwell with the thought of another's mind.

In a talk entitled "Individuation" given to the *British Psychological Society* in 1970, Winnicott (1989) writes:

Thinking about the child on the way to objectivity...nature allows the baby an intermediate position, as is clearly shown in cases where a baby employs a transitional object. Nature allows this but we must provide it. Such an object stands at one and the same time for the baby and for the mother. It is both, though it is neither. In this way life is an inverted pyramid and the point on which the inverted pyramid rests is a *paradox*. The paradox demands acceptance as such, and need not be resolved (285).

The infant's intermediary position, between creating and discovering the object, between being and discovering self and other is a powerful frame for the study of development. The baby's growth rests pyramidal upon a paradox that the other accepts without resolving, one that positions original creativity on the side of that which cannot be determined about the makeup of the mind. On the way to objectivity, the maternal other provides the infant the opportunity for the illusion that the world is created and discovered simultaneously. The future of this infantile illusion, I will argue, finds its way into the cultural experience of the adult's own developmental affairs.

What Winnicott's ideas about development illustrate is that much of what is called development is difficult to see and to communicate to others. To put it crudely, perhaps there can be no concept *of* development, only developmental concepts, only ideas about experiences in development that serve as theoretical tags to hold on to, which by their nature fail to account for their own extension and absorption within the developmental tapestry they point out and describe. Development is not only the process by which one becomes a self, but it is an ongoing process in which one must also *feel that one is the subject one has become*. In other words, we must come to understand our living conditions too as development, and, as Winnicott puts it, as containing an "I Am" element. The present study treats development as made from affect and ideation and thus explores the mind as both a lived condition and as conditioned by subjective theories of change, of physical as well as emotional growth.

And yet, to study human development is also to return in thought and feeling to a place we have in fact never been, a place we never get to be because we are never outside of our development and therefore never able to look back upon it without at the same time extending its surface. As Deborah Britzman (2009) argues: "The problem with development is that it is always on the move, even in moments of fixation given the defensive strategies needed to stay in a place that no longer exists" (27). To study human development is always to ask what we make of our development under the supposition—rather than verification—that it has taken place, and indeed continues to do so up to the end of our lives. As an experience, development opens the subject to an archaic exigency to which we cannot directly respond, and yet the study of development nonetheless

returns us to a question at the heart of our human condition, at the crux of creativity: What else can be made in the intermediary spaces between the conditions we find?

## **1.2 Figures in Development: Cases for thought**

Working from Winnicott's theoretical frame my dissertation is structured by an inquiry into the creativity and conflicts of three exemplary figures of twentieth century thought: a scientist, Marie Curie (1867-1934); an artist, James Joyce (1882-1941); and a philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). These figures characterize various facets of the twentieth century debate on the nature of representing human efforts in science, literature, and criticism in the march of pre and post-war Europe. Each figure challenges the formal procedures of their respective fields of research and thought with revolutionary ideas and original styles of thinking them. My study pictures the historical figure through the lens of development and the question of how ideas find representation in the writing of culture and context. I draw from Jacqueline Rose's (2014) illuminating study of figures, *Women in Dark Times*, as a narrative model for analysis of the historical figure's passionate idiom and the at times tragic effort to understand otherwise unthought conflicts particular to a life and time. I look to historical figures as exemplars for an image of human development, to re-find certain developmental lines within fields of thought as categories for the works which bear witness to growth and change within a particular life.

My study extends Britzman's (2006) claim that representations of learning create "a fictitious space, not because learning is unreal but because learning leans on affect and desire which, in turn, mesmerize representation" (5). Composing portraits of

development from historical figures places development too in a fictitious space. In other words, development also leans on affect and desire, and so to represent development by historical exemplars is to paint pictures in the hopes of capturing a certain likeness, but more importantly still, of creating impressions, which often means drifting into fictitious spaces. I propose portraits of exemplary figures in development as a means of thinking with and about our own development. Expanding this proposition into a research method, I draw from historian John Forrester's (2016) insightful work with case studies *Thinking in Cases*. Forrester thinks the particularity of the case as a way of attending to and of illustrating, without proving, what takes place in thought. Following Forrester, I cast historical figures as cases in the study of development, narratives and modalities for thought on the question of how the mind develops and also how development itself requires a mind to think its conditions.

Forrester builds on a tradition indebted to another historian, Michel Foucault. Fundamental to how we interpret human subjectivity, Foucault (2005) claims, is the movement of an individual's ideas from the remote territory of solitary reflection into the effusive, recorded, and socio-cultural realm of historicity and historical understanding. The exemplary figure tenders a certain lucidity regarding the development of reflective procedures as a means of returning to what is personal about history and to what is historical about the all-too-personal problem of communicating with others. The exemplary figure shines a particular kind of light on that which is hard to see in human development: the meaning that fixes around feelings and expressions, giving sense to the force of embodiment. In other words, the historical figure read through the living

conditions of her ideas and her work, shimmers with the luminosity of subjectivity in development.

Marie Curie, James Joyce, and Jacques Derrida each sign their name under a particular moment in history and thought, and over a particular case of subjectivation—the process, Foucault (2005) writes, by which an individual becomes the subject of her ideas by becoming the object of her thought. Foucault asks: “Can there be an objectification of the subject?” (317). My dissertation opens a discussion of development from a species of response to this question, repeating Britzman’s (2009) claim that “we can only objectify the self with something nonobjective: our projections” (63). In other words, as Britzman insists, the developmental subject is composed from omnipotent fantasies and the byways of illusion, disillusionment, and re-illusionment in relations to others. Psychoanalysis admonishes, after all, that we cannot be afraid of our projections, that we must try, rather, to sustain an interest in what projection means and feels like, and how the seen is always composed in part from a desire and wish to see. Already, the wish gives us a hint: The meaning attributable to the subject’s development can also be what the study of development is about.

This study returns to what Jacqueline Rose (2014) names “the original wager”: the belief that “the personal is key” (x). The exemplary figure as a figure of development offers recourse to this most inter-personal developmental question: What does the other’s mind mean for our own? Building from important scholarship that employs exemplary figures to sketch the grand themes of our times (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986; Kristeva, 2001; Rose, 2014), I explore what having original ideas has to do with the tasks of development. Kristeva’s trilogy *Female Genius: Life, Madness, Words*, a study of three

figures—philosopher, Hannah Arendt, psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, and poet, Colette—provides an exemplar for my approach. In her study, Kristeva analyzes a quality she names “female genius,” whose value she gives over to the sway of words and the freedom of writing in the madness of witnessing dark times. I bring Kristeva’s insistence on the literary, in addition to her interest in psychoanalytic theory, for its language of suffering and the poetics of potentiality, to a study of historical cases as portraits of development. As in Kristeva’s studies of characters of genius, Curie, Joyce, and Derrida are here characters of development with poetic potentiality. It is not biography that I am after but the emotional scenes and procedures of thought that both make the figure an ungraspable other and at the same time an ever-renewing resource for questions about how desire and effort color the works and objects that develop thought.

For Foucault (2005) analysis of the historical subject begins from the question of how forms of reflexivity are also practices in subjectivity. In Winnicott’s view these practices debut in infancy with a transitional space as crucible for our first experiences of love and separation. The question here for the historical subject concerns a relationship between the forms of reflexivity that make the mind at the beginning of life and those that impel the mind forward in and within a development that lasts a lifetime—from the untested waters of the unthought on eventually to the very edges of the thinkable. Under the psychoanalytic admonishment that we return intermittently throughout life to prior organizations of mind and feeling, I am interested in thinking development as a problem of meaning through portraits of historical figures with an eye to the primordial mind, imagining what it was like to have our very first ideas, and to have learned to think from the demands of absolute dependency in early infancy.

Specifically, then, the study brings three exemplary figures to bear upon Winnicott's paradox of development that from infancy onwards there will have been an object that is both discovered and created simultaneously. The object, found as already existing but also as having been invented in the imagination, facilitates developmental achievements. Paramount to the success of this paradox is the presence and thinking mind of a primary caregiver, unacknowledged by the infant at first, but progressively allowed for as the baby develops, a caregiver who can be relied upon to present the object when it needs to be created and to accept that it was only found because also created. In this way, the caregiver gives the baby "the illusion that the world can be created out of need and imagination" (Winnicott, 2005, 91).

Winnicott's paradox helps join my two subjects—human development and historical figures—starting from the question of what creativity means for the development of subjectivity, and so to theorize development *developmentally*, that is to say, to theorize development under the supposition that something has always already been made from the conditions we find, namely, our felt perception of them. My treatment of Winnicott's paradox is blatantly experimental: I count the paradox as a developmental fact, but a fact in the way Britzman (2006) employs the term, not as a "foundation for the building blocks of action but an experiment to be used for thinking about what is occurring or has already happened" (157). As Britzman expands, a fact "will be affected by the very experience it tries to grasp...leaving no safe distance" (166). Similarly, as I read into the words and lived facts of the creative minds of three figures, there will be no safe distance between representations of development and developmental representations. In other words, this study leaves no safe space between, on the one hand,



exemplary others as figural portraits of developmental tasks and achievements, and, on the other hand, the reader's own development. My task is to stay close to how the figure's words purport to represent the mind and make sense from its development, to see in what ways development can be thought and elaborated in the texts that bear witness to its trials and tribulations.

My experimental portraiture of historical figures builds from their own words regarding the development of their reflective procedures. This experimentation is along the lines described by Paul Ricoeur (1970), for whom reflection is "the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be, through the works which bear witness to that effort and desire" (46). Accordingly, each portrait bears witness to an effort to exist and a desire to be through the creative works of the imagination, which characterize thought and categorize research. Taking another cue from Forrester, portraits of development as cases for thinking can be distinguished by the paradigms of their reflective modes: scientific, artistic, and philosophical. Indeed, as Britzman (2003b) invites: "One could, after all, read our categories of thought as trying to say something difficult about psychical reality" (129). In my study, the scientist, the artist, and the philosopher each say something regarding the difficulties of psychical reality, and the developmental conflicts that make its expressions worthwhile: how the self comes together in the first place, however paradoxically, and comes apart and together again throughout the affective arcatures of living and the maelstrom of forces and significations that classify human reflection.

If the figure serves here or there as a representation or illustration it is always in relation to an authorial discourse that points her out. It is always as a "being-with" that

the figure figures. And it is always a “being-with” that figures the figure. It is in an effort to say “we” that I make use of figures, to initiate a relationship, psychological as much as historical or literary. Derrida (1998) questions this relation: “‘We’ is always said by a sole person, it is always a sole person who has the gall to say ‘we psychoanalysts,’ ‘we philosophers,’ ‘with you psychoanalysts,’ ‘with us philosophers,’ or, still more seriously, ‘we psychoanalysts with the philosophers’ or ‘with us philosophers’” (43). And yet, is there another way to claim our togetherness? The present study makes these and many like claims—we scientists are here with the artists who are themselves with us philosophers—for these titles are the names we give to the categories and styles of our developing minds, to the possible ways we can attend to, take account of, and witness our desire to be. Because of our development we are always tied to the other: I is also “we”.

In the case of development, the sole person is vested to say “we”. This is, in fact, precisely why we might look to exemplary figures to learn something about our developing selves. It is not a matter of striving after the authority of great minds by distilling the secrets of their originality, but rather of seeing how the mind at work, the mind in development—the exemplary mind as much as the mind that reads the story of an exemplary mind—is a mind in common. In this I repeat Jacques Ranciere’s (1991) *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, who admonishes: “it’s not a matter of making great painters; it’s a matter of making people capable of saying, ‘me too, I’m a painter,’”(67). And so I extrapolate: The study of human development is a matter of examining the human capacity of saying, “me too, I’m a scientist; me too, I’m an artist; me too, I’m a philosopher.”

Rose (2014) argues that what the figure offers “is a form of understanding, neither pure nor good, but equal to the ravage of the world that confronts them” (26). This effort, a defining feature of twentieth century scholarship, is here framed from the vantage of the psychoanalytic contention that creativity and subjectivity concatenate. For the terms of this effort, and for the basic elements that give shape to this form of understanding as a psychological framework, I look to Winnicott and to the earliest affected scenery of infancy. Winnicott gives my dissertation the theoretical frame for a study of figures in development, tracing a tenuous but enduring link between the birth of subjectivity and the many unequal destinies of creative living. Here we find contiguous links between instinctual life, the lifeworld of ideas and the fantasy life that supports them and picks them apart. We find here as well the lasting connectivity between the mind as it comes together at the start of life and those reflective procedures that characterize the resplendency of its works throughout life.

We begin, then, or rather, we have always already begun from a question regarding how we come to think about development, and what thinking about development means for development itself, as a concept, as a subject of study, an object of thought, and as a human condition. My dissertation is a thought experiment that dallies with the conundrums of a psychoanalytic paradox as a style of portraiture in development, and so at the outset proposes a choice on behalf of a particular kind of thinking: that “research itself can be conceptualized as a thought experiment” (Britzman, 2006, ix).

### **1.3 “The Human Infant Has Ideas”**

Winnicott employs the dyad of baby and maternal other as a model of inquiry, employing a paradox of infancy to orient thinking on the emotional situations of uneven development. Key in this model is the quality of attitude of the maternal other in attending to the various obstacles to growth that mark the human's start in life in absolute dependency and vulnerability. The maternal attitude privileges meaning over etiology in the sense that obstacles too can be sought for what they mean in addition to what they obstruct. The maternal other helps provide the illusion that obstacles to impulse, just like the objects they seek, are created because found. Another way of putting this is that ideas can be obstacles as much as obstacles can be ideas. In pairing Winnicott's maternal model of inquiry with the creative conflicts of three historical figures I keep between objects and obstacles, the seemingly abyssal space between the "now" of a reader and the "then" of a historical figure. The historical figure here operates at two levels: First, as figuring the constitutive scenes of subjectivity in infancy—contact with reality, integration and symbolization, and doubts about the self—and second, as figuring those categories of thought into which the reflective procedures of the adult are positioned—scientific, artistic, and philosophical.

One of the fundamental postulates around which Winnicott arranges some of his most alluring claims is the belief that the baby's ideas are there right from the start of life. Tied to this claim is a corresponding speculation: Tolerating elementary ideas is where development, perhaps, begins. This speculation founds the theoretical lens of my study. "If you believe, as I do," Winnicott (1992a) proposes, "that the baby has ideas right from the start, the feeding times were often pretty terrible, disrupting the quiet of sleep or of waking contemplation" (80). The belief that "the human infant has ideas" is a

complication to infant care, but one of extreme importance in the study of the value and meaning of the emotional world for development throughout life.

Ideas are ambivalently felt in their debut as elaborations of acute bodily sensation, making imaginative fantasies from instinctual experience. Winnicott's theory of development is concerned largely with what to make of what the infant herself might make from her embryonic ideational activity. His theory of development, then, involves the question of how to care about subjective experience under the supposition that it is difficult to bear in mind and understand, and that it is constantly under construction and threatened by its own construction. In Winnicott's view, instincts and their satisfaction are accompanied in the baby by ideas, indistinguishable in infancy from fantasy, illusion, and hallucination. Early ideas are impelled by an original aggression: The baby inhabits an identity between the need to feed and the desire to hallucinate feeding. As Winnicott illustrates beautifully throughout his written work, these nascent ideas—an intermingling of fantasy and reality—are what the baby's world is first made from. The study of development can be said to begin precisely with the study of this muddle, and for Winnicott, from the question of how the baby's ideas are met and responded to by the techniques of care of a maternal other.

Winnicott argues that if the infant learns to tolerate the interruption of quiet living by instinctual life and orients her desire by directing aggressive feelings outward so as to meet maternal provisions, then imagination—which is fastened to libido—can be enjoyed and even elaborated. “Toleration of one's destructive impulses results in a new thing,” Winnicott (2011) observes, “the capacity to enjoy ideas, even with destruction in them, and the bodily excitements that belong to them, or that they belong to” (121). Such

questions of belonging—ideas belonging to bodily excitement or bodily excitements belonging to ideas—are decidedly undecidable for Winnicott. The question Winnicott asks, however, is: Whence this toleration? How does one learn to wait when life has only just begun? Toleration of ideas is possible because we are at first both more and less than one: originally two, infant and maternal other, merged, but together composing something still less than whole, or rather, still always in development and so always incomplete.

Winnicott assures us: The infant can tolerate the anxiety and attack of her early destructive impulses and her fantastical ideas about them, of being consumed by her environment while desiring absolute consumption in return, if she is held together by a maternal other who in this way fills out the experience with the added quality of a human relationship. An other holds the infant together in moments when feelings and ideas pull her apart. Here, as Winnicott (1992a) notes, the baby can “bear the frustration of primitive pleasures, if waiting adds the warmth of a personal relationship” (96). Waiting adds warmth to ideas and bearing frustration elaborates the ideas that supplement aggression. The warmth of the holding scene inaugurates the baby’s mind. There is nowhere for thinking to go for its debut but directly into the arms of the other. And so we might say that the study of development begins from the course of infantile ideas, in the experiential arc that carries the baby from instincts to ideas, from ideas to obstacles in thought, back and forth, a course held together by a maternal other who ferries the young self across the aggressive seas of feeling under broad skies of ideation.

#### **1.4 Acceptance Without Resolution**

“Here again is a huge subject,” Winnicott (1992b) anticipates, “one that even concerns philosophers since the paradox has to be accepted that what the baby creates was already there, and that in fact the thing the baby creates is part of the mother which was found” (65). This object, created so as to be discovered and discovered waiting to be found, is a tangle of infantile conception and perception. The baby feels as though the world is made from need and so finds and creates her object over and over—about a thousand times, says Winnicott (2005): “What I am referring to in this part of my work,” he clarifies, “is not the cloth or the teddy bear that the baby uses—not so much the object used as the use of the object. I am drawing attention to the paradox involved in the use by the infant of what I have called the transitional object” (xvi). The paradox signals a transition at the level of existence, of psychological activity, in the mind of the infant. The use of the object marks a transitional foray from subjective conception to objective perception, from fantasy to reality, but, importantly, the object accommodates crossover, reversal, and the *mélange* of conditions in the world with products of the mind. The transitional object is used to facilitate both real and imagined experience.

Of course, the paradox does not feel paradoxical to the baby. The baby’s mind operates by way of a paradox—Me and not-Me share the space between them. Winnicott designates by this paradox a liminal space between the material conditions of existence, the affected experience of perception, on the one hand, and the creative world of conception and imagination, on the other. In this transitional space, the child’s misapprehensions and misrecognitions matter little compared to an adaptation in her capacity to feel a living relationship between world and mind. Use of the transitional object produces a “potential space” that includes, in addition to material force and

psychical significance, culture and the emotional curvature of ideas, their temporality and affectivity. The infant's ideas are both the causes as well as consequences of her creative and aggressive use of the transitional object—the distinction isn't important, in fact the *indistinction* is precisely the point.

The use of an object opens a third space for the infant between the immediacy of bodily instincts (self) and the delay of desire (other), where what is “Me” and “not-Me” can be felt to be co-determined. From the infant's point of view, the object “is halfway between everything” (Winnicott, 2006, 41). The transitional object cleaves a space somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity, a space that is, if one were asked to point it out, in fact nowhere in particular. Winnicott speculates that the space of this transitional paradox is the prototype for how the human will relate existence to significance throughout life, a relation of biology to meaning, and for how the developing subject can begin to make something meaningful from the facts of her development, from dependence, from supplementarity, and from the exuberance of their exchanges.

The infant uses the transitional object and its paradoxical aspect to make experimental journeys—with occasional sojourns—from a state of being merged with the maternal other to being in relation to her, and eventually being able to use her, which means accepting that she is separate and part of a reality that is external to the self and is shared. In other words, the use of the object ushers in a separation and what counts a great deal in this transition, therefore, is the point of view of the infant. Winnicott (1992a) emphasizes the value of illusion:

From the infant's point of view this first object was indeed created out of his or her imagination. It was the beginning of the infant's creation of the



world, and it seems that we have to admit that in the case of every infant the world has to be created anew... The world as it presents itself is of no meaning to the newly-developing human being unless it is created as well as discovered (169).

At stake, then, developmentally speaking, is nothing less than what the world can mean for the developing subject, not only everything that the world can come to mean, but first and foremost, how it is that meaning is lived through effort and desire.

As to the make-up of the object used in this transition, Winnicott (1992a) enlarges the range: “Sometimes, instead of objects we find techniques, like humming, or more hidden activities such as the matching of lights seen, or the study of the interplay of borders—as between two curtains that move slightly in the breeze, or the overlap of two objects that change in relation to each other according to movements of the infant’s head” (170). “Sometimes thinking,” he concludes, “takes the place of visible activities” (170). Just as the infant has ideas from the start, tolerating these ideas is the earliest form of thinking. The developmental paradox of the transitional object is a theoretical postulate, or, perhaps, posture: a helpful way of thinking about how the infant herself thinks. The ontological ambiguity of the object stems from its relation to the point of view of the baby, an ontic illusion and an existential fact.

Winnicott (1990a) holds firm, “the infant... does not have to decide, can be allowed to claim of something that is borderline that it is at one and the same time self-created and perceived or accepted from the world, the world that existed before the conception of the infant” (107). By respecting and tolerating the paradox in this case, the

maternal other respects and tolerates the unseen of the other's thinking mind. "Of the transitional object," says Winnicott (2005), "it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: 'did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?' The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated" (17). Essential, then, I argue, to the study of development is the acknowledgment of this agreement regarding the importance of an illusion, and the attitude toward emotional growth that such an agreement founds. In other words, as Winnicott (1990a) proposes, "an essential feature of transitional phenomena and objects is a quality in our attitude when we observe them" (130). This quality in the attitude of response is a capacity for thinking about the illusions of others built from the idea that dependence and interdependence are the phenomenological seeds of human meaning as a shared enterprise—that living and developing are matters of *confabulation*.

### **1.5 Outline of the Study: Development is an illusion that can be used**

The use of the transitional object supports the use of an illusion that conception and perception are simultaneous. Winnicott (2005) generalizes: "This matter of illusion is one that belongs inherently to human beings and...no individual finally solves for himself or herself, although theoretical understanding of it may provide a theoretical solution" (17). We are never finished with our illusions, but seeking theoretical understanding of them is a valuable use of their development. There is no conscious, direct line between the vitality of the infant's object relations and the adult's eventual ideational vigor in scientific, artistic, or philosophical thought. But perhaps we can study the importance of

the relationship between how the infant understands and is understood through her creative use of a transitional object, on the one hand, and how we continue to understand ourselves and others, and come to feel understood, in later life, engrossed in the cultural experiences of scientific, artistic, and philosophical pursuit.

For Winnicott (2005) the illusion produced by transitional phenomena “throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work” (19). The transitional object is deattached over time—it gradually loses its libidinal significance for the infant—as cultural interests develop. The object is not replaced or displaced, and it does not have to be mourned, it is, as Adam Phillips (1988) notes, “diffused” of significance: “interest is dispersed into other things”(117). Winnicott imagines a vivid developmental correspondence between transitional phenomena and cultural experience. I look to the creative conflicts of a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher to explore this correspondence.

Winnicott (1998) simplifies the matter of primitive development by separating out three phenomena that help divide and structure my discussion of each figure: “One [achievement] is making contact with reality. Another is feeling that you live in your body, and the other is the integration of the personality” (24). These achievements of primitive development in infancy are cues that structure the inquiry of my three portraits: The scientist figures the human’s effort to make contact with reality; the artist figures symbol formation as the integration of a self; and the philosopher figures the self’s doubts about the mind’s embodiment. Although each figure addresses every achievement, I examine aspects of development in the thought of each thinker that vividly brings it to

light. So for example, I explore infantile fantasy life retroactively as the human's first contact with reality in and through a discussion of Marie Curie's account of the meaning and development of her scientific discoveries; I explore symbol formation along the lines of cleavage established in transitions from unintegration to integration and into disintegrative experience in and through a discussion of James Joyce's literary masterpieces; and finally, I explore the achievement of doubts about the self and the indwelling of the psyche-soma in and through a discussion of Jacques Derrida's deconstructive ideas and writing. As figures, however, it is important to keep in mind that these categories are banisters for thinking, as Hannah Arendt (2018) uses the term, to be used for support in movements up and down a stairway of developmental theory. The scientist too is artistic, and also philosophical, just as the infant who makes contact with reality also integrates the self and might even doubt there is a self at all. The artist is a scientist of symbolization. These categorizations are only as interesting as the movement they can support.

The second chapter is devoted to a brief discussion of the reading method I employ to animate exemplary figures as characters of development. Here I describe a reading practice that attends to each figure's words articulating the reflective procedures of their creative conflicts. I analyze the emotional world as permeating each thinker's discourse in the service of a quality of attitude that attends to the subject of development as a problem of thinking meaning. My reading methodology is both psychoanalytic and hermeneutic, drawn from Ricoeur's (1991) reading of textual effects upon the mind, and from Winnicott's (1992b) description of the maternal other's state of concentration, which he calls a "primary maternal preoccupation," a psychical phenomenon akin to

close reading that affectively reads and communes with the illusions and paradoxical experience of the infant without recourse to words and/or the need of origins. Chapter two makes a case for the dissertation's methodological design.

My analytic approach to three figures of development never formulates the question, "did you find it or create it?" Rather, assuming that their respective objects—the scientific, artistic and philosophical—are always already overdetermined, always already both created and found, I ask instead: What is it that the scientist, artist and philosopher creatively and subjectively conceive of so as to objectively perceive? My methodological frame emphasizes a fundamental liaison between the meaning of development and developments in meaning, and of subjectivity as a creative liminality between the material conditions of existence and the imaginative conditions of psychical reality that outstrip living with possibilities in being. To this end, I explore a range of ways in which we might each of us say, at one and many times, "me too, I'm a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher." Such a chorus already echoes an infancy whose remainders are always in development. The psychoanalytic provocation is that we can continue to read for the meaning of our earliest, most dependent, and most anxious experiences to learn more about who we are becoming and who we might become in developments yet to come.

Chapter three introduces the figure of the scientist, Marie Curie, whose imaginative work in mathematics, physics, and chemistry I associate with the infant's fantasy life and her use of fantasy to make contact with reality. Winnicott (1992a) claims of the infant: "Every physical process is enriched by fantasy, which steadily develops definiteness" (108). I argue that the fantasies that develop definiteness as the individual

grows up help describe the way in which the scientist herself conceives of and approaches her experimental contact with reality, how she gets into the stuff of an imagined noumenal world. I ask how the scientist makes use of theories of reality. Are they fantasies? The scientist must interpret, measure and make observable a world outside her inner feeling that is nonetheless permeated by projections and their possibilities for subjectivity.

In my portrait of Curie I argue that the objectivity of the scientist is premised upon a particular kind of thinking that typifies the mind's relation to first objects in infancy: a capacity to live within one's illusions. Working with the ideas of British philosopher of science, Alfred North Whitehead I explore how the scientist's objectivity is founded upon the folly of a particular fantasy: that which is not seen, but can be imagined and hypothesized, might also be tested and then discovered, verified, and perceived in the world. The scientist's genius is related, after all, to the passionate conviction she brings with her into her method of research, a conviction that enlivens her observational acuity. The scientist thinks a world otherwise than her perception of it in order to discover and confirm what else the world is like. In Curie's company I venture to the other side of visibility, where radioactivity must first of all be created and conceived of in order to be found and perceived. Curie helps raise the question of the relationship between life's matter and the matters of existence, between materiality and mortality. "The boundaries we create to hold our objects, after all," as Britzman (2006) asserts, "also represent our subjectivity" (148). Accordingly, Curie figures a series of questions: At what point does the objectively perceived threaten the integrity and liveliness of the subjective? Does imagining a world radically different from the one in which we live

mean imagining it without us? What is the relationship between emotional growth and scientific discovery? And finally, what are the emotional conditions of fantasy life that support the creative risks that give subjective play to the scientific self and then objective presence to her ideas?

In the fourth chapter I introduce the figure of the artist, James Joyce, who here characterizes the role of symbol formation in the integration of the personality, the role of the self as symbol and yet also of the symbol as absent other. Symbolization means for the infant that one thing can stand for another and in this way absence in experience can become presence of mind. The artist, then, figures the child's playful use of words and signs, an affective trialing with signifiers within an encircling swath of signified in an economy of force and form. I argue that the transitional object is for the infant a primordial sign, psychically symbolizing what is at once both Me and not-Me. Joyce's novels expand and explode the unique sets of self/other orderings made possible by words initiated by and in one's infancy. With the artistic self we meet a crisis of representation: The object enters an empire of signs and the infant has only signs with which to express the significance of her attachment to it. An examination of symbolization offers a way into the creative work of the artist's mode of reflection, of finding the familiar in the unfamiliar, as Marion Milner (1987) puts it.

Joyce figures a series of questions with the added complication that he writes his own artist figures as commentary: If the self is a necessary fiction, what does the development of fiction signify for the development of subjectivity? In what way does narration give the subject back to her living experience? Engaging this work I will

analyze to what extent the subject of development first of all must (re)write the self in relation to the other.

My third and final figure in chapter five is philosopher Jacques Derrida, under whose name is found, and was created, a conceptualization of thinking as deconstruction. With the philosopher I pursue a way of doubt as a means of accounting for the subject's desire to be: Doubts about the self give way to curiosity about others. As the trace of a difference between force and form, the self for the philosopher becomes a questioning stance. The philosophical mode of reflection here suggests a developmental position associated with the child's capacity to doubt the self, and to feel that one's doubting, doubtful mind dwells inside a body. In this way, the human's earliest situations of doubt are examined as a relationship to undecidability between mind and body, and self and other.

With Derrida I explore the way in which the transitional object and the maternal other call the subject's relation to herself into question and how the difference others make produces questions that endure in the creative and imaginative projects of the developing individual. The capacity to find the unfamiliar in the familiar is here classified under the epistemological banners of philosophical thought. Examining Derrida's written accounts of his own thought and, perhaps more importantly, his thought about the thought of others, I discuss the way in which the self, too, is a transitional object, at least in part, provided there can be belief in the other.

The philosopher brings to the study of development a series of questions that concern the nature of existence and the status of otherness in the life and mind of the self: What is the self such that it can doubt itself and also survive this loss? What comes



before the self and its world? Can belief in the other come to mean belief in a self yet to come? Derrida's own projects, conflicts, and destructive ideas will lead us to the question of how it is that doubts about the self enrich subjectivity and imbue the experience of development with significance that can be used for further development. The claim I give over to the philosopher is that the subject also *becomes* as an object of doubt.

The concluding chapter returns to the question of dependence as the thought of where development begins. Through fantasy in reality, symbolization in integration, and the indwelling of doubts and self, a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher give narrative force and form to the human condition of development from the question of how attitudes of response attend to subjective change and creative thought. I return again in the concluding chapter to consider what a change in our attitude might hold for education if we study the role of the other's response to the infant's development in the formation of a person.

In bringing exemplary figures to bear upon a paradox of human development the dissertation turns attention away from associations in the field of education between Nature and Nurture, as figural delegates for worries over creation and discovery, to focus instead on the way in which development is lived as meaning. Psychoanalytic thinkers have long conceived of human development from the underside of its geometry—its unconscious dimensions—as a choice on behalf of meaning that risks the illusion of evident phenomena in favor of the significance of internal forces. This choice marks the demand for educational acknowledgement of the inner world in development, an inner world that “can...be seen as something that can become infinitely rich” (Winnicott, 1990a, 82).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Mind That Holds the Text**

#### **2.1 Highly Sophisticated Reading for Very Simple Words Like Being**

My focus in this chapter is on reading as methodology. How does one read the lives and ideas of three exemplary figures as portraits of development, seeing in the effort and desire of a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher the future of a paradox of infancy? How does one read the writing lives of others for the question of how creative conflicts and original ideas develop in and through the changing conditions of one's life and mind?

To study human development through portraits of historical figures requires that I read for particular kinds of textual effects. The yields and flows of significance that mantle developmental experience at the level of the text are, by their nature, difficult to see. My reading method is also affected by my own development. The challenge is to try to recognize the way in which others are made intelligible in relation to our own otherness, to read in order understand others apart from ourselves. As Britzman (1998) argues, "reading practices might well perform something interesting, and this has to do with the production of social selves whose thinking about their own structures of intelligibility recognizes and refuses the confinement of sameness and the seduction of affirmation that has as its cost the expulsion of otherness" (85). The intelligibility of self and other are related to the kinds of understanding that are made possible in front of a text. My readings of three figures of development explore how thinking becomes a textual event in the acts of writing and analysis. My study also researches how reading practices shed light on the internal dynamics at play when engaging the lives of others.

This chapter loiters in the alleyways of metaphor so as to make from the scene of reading certain claims about the broader meanings created and found in the work of human understanding. Understanding between writing and reading is my methodological object. Privileging the maternal relation as placeholder for our earliest ideas and feelings I liken reading to the way in which the maternal other holds and handles her infant. My assumption is that the early encounters in which the maternal other generates reading in development to get to know her infant can be likened to the process whereby a reader meets the development of an author's work, ideas, and mind. The method seeks to read development closely, affectively, sensationally, and speculatively, leaning on the questions: How can research dwell with the work of the other's mind and receive something it has not made? How can a paradox of reading, of finding and creating a figure of development, lead into a discussion of understanding as a relational experience?

For the praxis that recommends the method, I draw from Winnicott's (1992b) short informal text written for mothers, *Babies and Their Mothers*, and his description of the maternal state of concentration essential for understanding the infant's development. There are after-effects to what is read at the beginning. Building from Winnicott I examine the conceptual fecundity of the maternal other's attitude of response in her careful handling of an infant as a model for reading exemplary figures as portraits of development. The proposition is that the maternal attitude has something to teach research in development, tolerating rather than resolving a paradox in the on-going quest for self-understanding. I ask what readers do with meaning and what meaning does to the reader.

*Babies and Their Mothers* is a discussion of identification in maternal care: the “highly sophisticated” identification of the maternal other with the baby, an identity forged in the “quiet moments of contact,” and an achievement “of the relationship which the mother makes possible,” in which “there is the beginning of everything,” giving “meaning to very simple words like *being*” (1992b, Winnicott, 11). This sophisticated identification baits my methodological question: Is this encounter anything like reading and if so, what is being read, and can this reading practice be constructively compared to other kinds of reading? And in respecting the limits of what reading can have in common with child care, I ask further: What kinds of understanding of self, other and experience are made possible by reading for identification in this way? What does human development signify, in turn, when applied to the problems of reading?

Winnicott (1992b) asks: “Could we not say that mothers must be expected to see more than is there?” (36). In order to accept rather than resolve the paradox of the baby’s transformative interactions with transitional phenomena, the maternal other is expected to hold contradictory experiences together, stitching infantile fantasies to possibilities in being so as to facilitate maturational processes. The maternal other sees more than is there by believing in the continuity of the baby’s experience *from the point of view of the baby*. Maternal belief is what there is for the baby between what came before and what might very well come about. The result is an intermediate area of experience that exists as an idea in the mind of the infant, an idea arising somewhere between influence and interference, and leading everywhere. The basis for this result parallels Freud’s (1915) wager that “a gain in meaning is a perfectly justifiable ground for going beyond the limits of direct experience” (167).

Of course, in comparing reading to infant care I am not saying that a baby is a text. We can't reasonably expect a reader to believe in a book with the force of parental conviction. The text's survival does not depend on the reader's care. Nor does the text cry or talk back (though perhaps it is trying to do so). The maternal other is called out, faced, by the radical dependence of her baby, whereas the book can be left if its demands begin to feel intrusive. The question, then, is not whether or not the reader can perform maternal response, but in what ways it is possible to see in the techniques for reading and response employed by the maternal other useful techniques for self-other understanding in general. In this study I propose a method of reading that both gives and takes in the style of the maternal other, that illusions and disillusion, however gradually, so as to make way for the toleration of multiple meanings and frustrated feelings, for a waiting mechanism that holds ideas together and apart so that there is both playing and reality in thought and theory. The maternal other accepts conflicts in understanding for how they might disillusion or console fantasies of omnipotence, and so also perhaps the fantasies of the scientist, the artist, and the philosopher as well. The maternal other gives up her omnipotence in this relation. So too must the researcher.

## **2.2 “More Than is There”**

Over his pediatric career and throughout his psychoanalytic work with children and families, Winnicott (1992b) observed “an evolution of attitude with regard to the infant” (72). The evolution came in the form of a gradual increase in awareness and sensitivity around the unseen elements in personality development in infant care. My corresponding conjecture is that research itself might undergo a similar evolution of

attitude, modeled upon a metaphor of maternal orientation, where practices of reading can lean on the unverifiable in shared experience for gains in meaning. Research into the subject of development, then, can be said to hold together fictional and historical registers as between subjective conception and objective perception in the interest of what can be said about continuity and discontinuity in experience. The researcher-as-reader is also asked to see more than is there, and to wait in this anticipatory space for the surfeit of significance that becomes of changes in the lives of others.

Winnicott (1992b) contends: “The basis for all theories about human personality development is continuity, the line of life...continuity which carries with it the idea that nothing that has been part of an individual’s experience is lost” (90). Britzman (2016) clarifies, “continuity in the lifeworld of the mind is unconscious” (29). Continuity in the development of subjectivity recedes always at its edges into the realm of the discontinuous, the unknown, which threatens to pull on the veil of the unknowable. The maternal other supplies and supports the baby’s illusion that there can be continuity despite the changes that count as maturation. In these exchanges disillusionment too, which the maternal other introduces with gradual failures in the meeting of need, is a means of encountering the self. Seeing more than is there means reading emotional development for the continuities of significance that haunt discontinuities in experience. The maternal other, according to a particular quality in her attitude of care facilitates an area of experience for the infant in which continuity and discontinuity are aligned with imaginative possibilities.

Winnicott (1992b) names the quality in the attitude of the maternal other the “primary maternal preoccupation,” likening it to a “psychiatric state, like withdrawal or

concentration” (93). And further, Winnicott sees a “valuable economy in the use, even exploitation, of the term *holding* in description of the setting in which major communications take place at the beginning of a baby’s experience of living” (96). The significance of what it means to hold in one’s arms and mind the possible meanings of the other’s experience also cannot be overstated. I employ and also exploit the term holding here in reference to the structural, semantic, and aesthetic guardrails of the text, to a certain readerly borderline that allows play and confusion between rational and emotional logics. But perhaps more importantly, the reader too is charged with holding the inner dynamic of the text, charged as vessel for the silent communication on the page, for that which is more than the text towards which every text brazenly leans, there where it belongs neither to author nor reader but somewhere in the communicatory gesture they form by coming together in quiet moments of contact.

“*The mother does not need to know what is going on in the baby,*” asserts Winnicott (1992b), striking a distance between knowing, feeling, and understanding, and between the facts of development and the emotional conflicts that constitute their significance (96). “The baby’s development,” Winnicott expands, “cannot take place except in relation to the human reliability of the holding and the handling” (97). There is a way, then, of holding what is going on without knowing what it is, seeing both less than everything and also more than is there by tending to the limits of experience, to what interrupts and recommences the individual’s sense of “going on being,” as Winnicott terms it. The primary maternal preoccupation is an attention to those limits that subject the self to conditions that both inform and are informed by her ideas, which bump up here

and there against the recalcitrance of an external reality and the unwieldiness of instinctual life.

I am describing the primary maternal preoccupation as a hermeneutics of emotional growth. In other words, the maternal other sees and interprets more than the baby's development signifies. Development becomes a text to be read rather than an evident phenomenon to be measured. Reading development becomes an exercise in understanding the unseeable. The infant can't conceive of whence the other arrives to hold her. And neither can the other who handles the infant see what the infant knows. Reading about development requires that we account for understanding that which cannot be seen. Winnicott makes a case for the unforeseeability inherent in growing up by linking thought to the effort of tolerating ideas, and so to a mechanism of waiting without knowing what one is waiting for. In a way, unforeseeability is the law of development, the condition of possibility for the thought of development: In order to imagine that by the study of development we may come to see and understand ourselves and others *better*, we must first accept that there is something about others and ourselves that is unforeseen and as such difficult to understand. The maternal other imagines, under the aegis of foresight, that her infant's development is possible without knowing in advance what it is.

Can we qualify the practice of reading, then, taking place between maternal other and infant? Britzman's (2009) own model of reading elucidates this dynamic:

I analyze the slow events of reading to illustrate two irresolvable conflicts animated and transferred onto the scene of reading: one belongs to an encounter with what is illegible yet impresses psychical reality, while the



other concerns putting these impressions into language to speak and write about what is ambiguous and unknown in external reality (47).

Irresolvable, these conflicts program a reading method that outstrips its own temporality, reading that is already on the way to writing its impressions. Key, then, is the notion that the impressions of the baby's mind come to impress the mind of its mother. Perhaps we can look inside the text while staring directly at it, just as the maternal other looks into the infant's behavior to see experience and to imagine the development of ideas and a self as a story about thought in continuity and discontinuity. Perhaps reading as holding and responding are basic situations in living and learning.

“We could almost say,” Winnicott (1992b) suggests, “that those who are in the position of caring for a baby are as helpless in relation to the baby's helplessness as the baby can be said to be” (103). “Perhaps,” he wonders, “there can be a battle of helplessnesses” (103). It is in relation to the dynamic flows of helplessness and interdependence between self and other—between the remembered dependency of one and the actual dependence of the other—that the maternal other reads into the needs and desires of the infant, her creative activities as well as her conflicts. The analogy of reading with a primary maternal preoccupation means we might make room in ourselves for multiple meanings, for paradoxical accounts, for tolerating the fact that we are helpless to know in advance what the other means. If there can be a battle of helplessnesses, then perhaps there can also be relational understanding.

### 2.3 Unknowability and Unverifiability, Where Understanding Begins

My reading method is also a reading of Winnicott's theory and style drawn from Thomas Ogden's (2012) *Creative Readings: Essays on seminal analytic works*. Ogden reads analytic texts to make room for the development of meaning as a commentary upon how lived experience exceeds its own indexical capabilities—that we live a reality always in excess of our account of it. For Ogden, psychoanalytic texts await readers so as to occupy the unforeseen ambits of human desire and sense. “While the words on the page remain the same,” writes Ogden, “what changes when I am successful in reading creatively are the meanings of the words and sentences, meanings that have been waiting to be found, but have never until the present moment found a reader to discover them, to be changed by them, and to change those potential meanings in the process of discovering them” (10). Analogously, so too does the maternal other change the meanings of the baby's development, and is change by them, in the process of discovering them and creating meaning for and from what has been found. Perhaps we too, then, can read so as to change and be changed by how we understand development in the process of discovering what a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher have to say about how their own ideas develop. In other words, reading creatively ties subjective meaning to the meanings of the other's subjectivity.

Fundamental to this reading method, as Ogden notes, is the psychoanalytic idea of transference activity: that we can read with attentiveness to the affective remainders of childhood experience that permeate the production, expression, and reception of knowledge and ideas. Transference does not only signify a repetition, Ogden (2012) clarifies: “*Transference activity...is a psychological act not of reliving infantile and*

*childhood experience but, rather....of experiencing for the first time...an emotional event that occurred in infancy or childhood, but was impossible to experience at the time” (41).*

Transference offers new opportunities in the emotional experience of conveying meaning from affective layers laid down in childhood but whose significance is open and unforeseen. My portraits of development are the products of a reading practice open to transference activity, taking seriously Helene Cixous’ (1993) reminder: “The light comes from inside, the book comes through the head (mine)” (23). Methodologically speaking, then, the reading practice of the dissertation labors somewhere between coming to an understanding of the self and coming to an understanding of the other as figure, where interpretation means reading about the life and ideas of others in a way that reflects self-understanding.

Transference affects this study, most of all to Winnicott himself, whose ideas structure the theoretical frame of my study, but also the ethos surrounding its very structuration. My attachment to Winnicott’s whimsical play with psychoanalytic theories of reality began in a reading group in the first year of my PhD when reading about child analysts in Europe and the history of their debates in the years during and following the Second World War. I was struggling at the time with worries over my place in graduate school and the nature of the conversations I wanted to have in pursuit of the doctorate. As I read about the vehement disagreements between the British and Viennese schools of child psychoanalysis and debated internally between perceived theoretical camps in my own faculty, I found a place for myself in Winnicott’s style of thought, and in his relative independence in the infamous controversial discussions of 1938. Belonging to neither side of the debate, Winnicott belonged in fact to both—a reminder that in theory there

can be a holiday from the demand to take sides, at least for a time. Reading Winnicott has always felt to me like a holiday from sides, a tributary for the undecidable. All this to say, transference affects reading, or to put it the other way around, there can also be a reading by way of transference. In this third space—as Ogden describes the place of reading, and as Winnicott describes the place of transitional phenomena—between text and mind, between Me and not-Me, is a methodological proposition that supports the developmental readings of historical figures: The texts that register the development of exemplary ideas also await creative readings.

Winnicott’s style of communicating difficult ideas, and difficulty with ideas, provides another cue for a methodology of reading. Famously resistant to the didactic solicitude of the medical profession, especially in its dealings with parents regarding the health and growth of their children, Winnicott’s theoretical work does not seek to advise on best practices in child-rearing, but endeavors, rather, to convey an attitude of response that allows for a certain degree of playfulness in approaches to what care and facilitation mean. He was notorious for leaving out of his communications references to his sources when he himself was not the author of the idea he made use of. In fact, Winnicott was not fond of using the writing of others in his communications at all since he saw unique value in expressing an idea in a way that feels personal and idiomatic. In a talk entitled “D.W.W. on D.W.W.” in which he traces his psychoanalytic influences, Winnicott (1989) confesses: “I realized more and more as time went on what a tremendous lot I’ve lost from not properly correlating my work with the work of others” (573). “It happens to be my temperament,” he accepts, “and it’s a big fault” (573). His point is that the fault can be tolerated and accepted in the interest of what the theory can open for thought.

Here his body of work mimics his developmental paradox and he asks that he not be made to decide whether he found or created the ideas he felt most creative in making use of.

In other words, Winnicott's lexicon of development gives a certain precedence to the saying over the said. His terminology—"good enough mother," "ordinary devotion," "going concern," "stage of concern," etc.—promotes conceptual and intellectual flexibility. Winnicott writes with a reading experience in mind, one that privileges connotative breadth over denotative accuracy. As Ogden (2012) remarks: "Winnicott, for the most part, does not use language to arrive at conclusions; rather, he uses language to create experiences in reading which are inseparable from the ideas he is presenting—or, more accurately, the ideas he is playing with" (76). Key is the relationship of the reader to the text, and implicitly, the relationship as well between the life of an idea and the practice of writing it down, between the activities of the mind and those of the text. For Ogden, the "effort is to demonstrate how the life of the writing is critical to, and inseparable from, the life of the ideas" (77). The textual plane is open, we might say, at both ends of its intensive field—this is the transference—to the problems of communication, interpolated between that which impels a writer to write, on the one hand, and that which impels a reader to read, on the other. Two sides, yes, but of a shared coin. As Cixous (1993) notes, "a real reader is already on the way to writing" (21).

Winnicott and Ogden together help me cast the researcher as a special kind of reader, occupied in advance with more than is there. Reading as akin to a primary maternal preoccupation lifts up a scholarly mode of concentration on possible meanings and possibilities in being cultivated in the liminality between the text and the living

through of its meanings—lived presumably somewhere behind or in front of the text. The reader, then, as Ogden (2012) points out, “must be willing and able not to know in order to make room in [herself] for a number of possible meanings to be experienced/created, and to allow one meaning or another or several meanings concurrently to achieve ascendance (for a time)” (82). The methodological aim of this study is to begin from this willingness not to know, to ask after what came before, and to read therefrom into the developing lives and ideas of exemplary figures as characters for the study of development. This is a practice of reading that purports precisely not to know the essence of its own subject matter, and not to know essences at all. But by the claim to read from a place of unknowing, and from a corresponding recessive attitude that looks back to infancy for new perspectives, the reader grapples, nonetheless, with the way ideas about the development of ideas enrich our understanding of ourselves and others.

To this end, I read figures for the narrative form that can be given to the story of their thought and ideas as arising from the conditions and conflicts of their development. The maternal other composes an account both severely accurate and intriguingly fictional from the facts of her infant’s wants and needs. So too can we thicken our descriptions of exemplary thinkers with creative readings that seek to understand the facts of a life in the manner in which one comes to understand a character in a novel, with an eye to how truthful impressions often lay with fantasy, projection and transference.

My reading method builds again from Britzman’s (1998), assumption that reading practices can be “educated to attend to the proliferation of one’s own identificatory possibilities and to make allowance for the unruly terms of undecidability and unknowability” (85). The paradox of development, that we create what we find and

signify a self from the psychological conditions of dependence, brings me to the question of how we can tolerate the slow reading that the study of development urges us to undertake. Helene Cixous (1993) writes of development that it is a “movement that gives us the feeling that beings mature and grow up,” and yet human beings, she adds, “don’t hesitate to act in all kinds of unclassifiable ways” (67). The unclassifiable, after all, is a problem for reading. And to read for the movement of personal growth is to concentrate for a time on the imperceptible, to look beyond the classifiable for more than is there, for gains in meaning on the other side of direct experience. “Perhaps that’s what going to the root is,” Cixous speculates, “going toward the unverifiable” (146).

Like the preoccupation of the maternal other, this approach to lived experience is a reading method concerned not with a progressive path from obscurity to clarification *per se*, but rather with the drift of sense *between* these nodes. My methodology occupies the lucidity tendered in this movement. Ogden (2012) refers to the “principal ‘context’ of the life of the infant” as to experiences “in which the mother actively participates with the infant in generating the infant’s internal life” (38). My method aims similarly at participating in engaging the internal life of the historical figure.

What are we reading for, then, when we seek to understand something about our own development by reading about the development of the ideas of others? For each of three exemplary figures—Curie, Joyce, and Derrida—I read their own words and the words of a select few others (Whitehead, Milner, Kristeva, Cixous) concerning their reflective modalities and creative conflicts as a study in the psychosocial and emotional situations that constitute subjectivity. Reading can be, as Cixous (1993) qualifies, an act that “suppresses the world” (19). In other words, reading is an act that opens worlds

*unidentical* to the one in which the reading takes place. The possible worlds held by the text and handled by the reader are also where developmental possibilities lie.

## **2.4 The Text of Development and the Developmental Text**

My psychoanalytic reading method follows from a hermeneutic theory of understanding underlining the interpretive drift of the reader herself—the inward movement of the light of the text, which as Cixous (1993) puts it, comes through the head (yours and mine). For Paul Ricoeur (2008) this hermeneutic task is twofold: “to reconstruct the internal dynamic of the text, and to restore to the work its ability to project itself outside itself in the representation of a world that I could inhabit” (18). I read for the internal dynamics of the texts that describe a scientist’s discoveries, an artist’s linguistic galaxy, and a philosopher’s undecidability, to make from these texts an account of development as open to problems of meaning and to the meaning of a paradox in infancy. In development, from the infant’s earliest achievements of contact with reality, symbolization, and doubts about the self, to the adult’s spectacular discoveries in science, art, and philosophy, readings of others engage the borderline between Me and not-Me.

“Knowledge of others is possible,” claims Ricoeur (2008), “because life produces forms, externalizes itself in stable configurations,” which include feelings, evaluations, and volitions (58). So while “it is [not] possible to grasp the mental life of others in its immediate expressions,” Ricoeur elaborates, “it is necessary to reproduce it, to reconstruct it, by interpreting objectified signs” (59). There is much to be gained in the reconstruction of mental life, how the mind finds expression in the effort to write and in



the desire to objectify life. The externalization of ideas produces a self such that the other might reproduce what is expressed in reading, held together—objectified but not objective.

Curie, Joyce, and Derrida each animate what Ricoeur (2008) calls the “relation of entrenchment which anchors the whole linguistic system, including books and texts, in something that is not primordially a phenomenon of articulation in discourse” (64). This relation of entrenchment characterizes the paradoxical textuality of infancy, as Winnicott describes, in which the unspoken relation of maternal other and transitional object articulate a self. My reading method seeks to give expression to how mental life is not primordially a phenomenon of articulation in discourse. I reconstruct the externalized forms of thought that a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher use to make sense of their changing conditions by linking their expressions to the relation of entrenchment that precedes the whole linguistic system and yet comes nonetheless to compose a text in front of which a self can be understood.

This reading method plays in the obscuring distance between the contemporary reader and the historical figure. The effort to grasp the other’s mind and developmental situation is an effort to understand a relation. “What seems most contrary to subjectivity, and what structural analysis discloses as the texture of the text,” Ricoeur (2008) goes on, “is the very medium within which we can understand ourselves” (84). The texture of the text, then, is a means by which to cast the thought of development back through the net of lived experience. As Ricoeur puts it, “thanks to writing, the ‘world’ of the text may explode the world of the author” (80). The primary maternal preoccupation is a cue for how to read explosive texts. “It is not a question of imposing upon the text our finite

capacity for understanding,” claims Ricoeur, “but of exposing ourselves to the text and receiving from it an enlarged self” (84). Can we tolerate not knowing what is going on so as to see more than is there?

Categorizing three exemplary thinkers according to their respective fields of study—science, art, philosophy—and composing developmental portraits from their unique forms of observation and reflection is an attempt ask how subjective changes signify and so necessitate a relational reading practice. The figure of development is a thought experiment directed along the lines of Ricoeur’s (2008) hermeneutic plan: “a progression starting from the simple schematization of my projects, leading through the figurability of my desires, and ending in the imaginative variations of ‘I can’ (174). We can also read what a scientist thinks about the simple schematizations of her scientific projects into what an artist thinks about the figurability of his desires so as to further explore how a philosopher thinks the imaginative variations of ‘I can.’

Roland Barthes’ (2010) recommends that his autobiography “be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel” (1). I extend his recommendation for the biographical content of the chapters that follows, in which a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher are read as characters in a novel on the subject of human development. Meaning will slip the distanciation between lived experience and the abstraction of ideas in the realization of a certain proximity between living, writing, and understanding. Like the infant with her transitional object, and, in turn, like the maternal other with her infant: “One will never be able to objectivize it with no remainder. The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive...opens out for the future” (Derrida, 1996, 68). In each effort to objectify development, a remainder. The study of development opens out toward a

developmental future. The primary maternal preoccupation is an orientation to the creative work of the other's imagination, tolerating multiple and contradictory meanings toward the possibility of sharing the illusion of creating what is found. To objectify this orientation in a study of development is to skip the question of how originary creativity is possible and to ask instead how creativity can always be read as saying something about the relationality at the heart of human development.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Marie Curie and the Fantasy Life of Radioactivity**

#### **3.1 Interest in Things Through Persons**

We enter now the domain of the scientist, here a figure for particular states of mind in development according to the question of what distinguishes the scientist's ideas and objects, and her means of thinking them. I bring to this question a reading method that looks for more than is there, and so my preoccupation is with the interanimation of exemplary ideas and the life of the mind at work—a psychology of knowing and epistemology of feeling. Marie Curie's development is here also the story of her relationship to ideas as scientific objects made from the emotional contours of her life.

The scientist can be said to figure a distinctive sequencing of perception, apperception, reflection, and observation that both stems from a personal history and also yields a theory of contact with the outside world, with external reality, and with others. Drawing in my portrait from Curie's private thoughts written down, I hasten to repeat Lauren Redniss' (2010) apology at the opening of her own portrait, citing the scientist's declaration: "There is no connection between my scientific work and the facts of my private life" (5). The claim is a disconnection Marie Curie was famous for. Her daughter Eve (2001) remembers it as her mother's motto: "which depicted her character, existence and vocation: 'In science we must be interested in things, not in persons'" (222). It is a perspective Curie herself attributes to her husband Pierre in the biography she penned after his unfortunate death. And yet, supposing scientific pursuits have their roots in the

private passions of the mind, some of the most interesting questions we can ask about the scientist have to do precisely with reconnecting these seemingly severed ties.

Alfred North Whitehead's (1967) *Science and the Modern World* provides a rubric for interpreting scientific ideas in the modern era as related to radical states of mind under construction. Whitehead's philosophy of science gives an historical perspective on the connection between revolutionary ideas in scientific theory and the putative evolutions of the human organism's capacity for abstracting thought. Whitehead gives a view of science as a grasping study built from belief and everyday life: "science is not merely the outcome of instinctive faith. It also requires an active interest in the simple occurrences of life for their own sake" (13). For their own sake and for the sake of others, the simple occurrences of life and the scientist's instinctive faith establish a revealing tension. Curie's active interest in simple occurrences is well documented, but we might ask: For whose sake is the active interest of the scientist itself interesting? Even the scientist eventually communicates her interest in things to persons. For, as Eve (2001) remarks regarding the uncomfortable celebrity Marie Curie's discoveries imposed upon her: "the years had taught [Marie] that the public...did not know how to be interested in things except through persons" (347). The scientist's new, exciting, and unforeseeably dangerous science of radioactivity, which claimed no relation to the facts of a private life, seemed nonetheless to necessitate an active interest in the simple occurrences of the life that lived its discovery.

Curie was a mathematician, chemist, and physicist. She was the first woman to receive a PhD in France, acquiring two, one in mathematics and one in chemistry. By the end of her life she was the recipient of two Nobel Prizes, in physics in 1903, which she

shared with her husband Pierre and with Henri Becquerel, and in chemistry in 1911, which she won individually. She was the first woman to receive the Nobel (her daughter, Irene, would become the second in 1935) and the first ever recipient of two. Perhaps it goes without saying, then, that in scientific study Curie was among the world's elite both in her capacity and volubility for theoretical material as well as in her assiduity and technical ability in experimentation and observation. Her objects of study seem to have been those of both the formal as well as natural sciences, as Elisabeth Roudinesco (2001) distinguishes: "the formal sciences discover their object by constructing it, whereas the natural sciences refer to an external object corresponding to empirical data" (101). In a certain sense, Curie's own science of radioactivity was to be a borderline object between the formal and natural registers. Defining scientific investigation by qualitative differences in the relationship to objects offers a generative way of describing the nature of scientific discovery more broadly, not as insightful visitation by momentary flashes of genius, but rather as the slow emergence of changes in the subjective relationship of a scientist to her objects.

Between an internal and an external object is a fantasy of their relation. My portrait of Marie Curie explores this fantasy as a story and theory of contact between subject and object, between subjective object and objective subject. I draw from Winnicott's developmental theory to innervate the connective tissues between fantasy life in human development and creative conflicts in scientific study. In Winnicott's schema the way in which the infant learns to relate to the ontic world of matter and objects external to her impulsive interiority is through a flight of fantasy. Winnicott argues that contact with external reality is at bottom an illusion—the refinement of which takes a

lifetime of development. “Every physical process is enriched by fantasy,” writes Winnicott of infancy (1992a), “which steadily develops definiteness and complexity as the baby grows” (108). The study of fantasy begins, Winnicott (1990a) argues, with the complications brought about by “those physiological changes that belong to activity and rest” (26). The complication is that the infant learns to anticipate experience by giving up omnipotent control over her environment. Here expectation can mean instinctual tension, and tolerating this tension opens the possibility for creative fantasy. That external reality includes things unknown is an anxious proposition, but one that makes room for aggressive instincts. “It can be said,” Winnicott claims, “that by reason of an aliveness in the infant and through the development of instinct tension the infant comes to expect something” (102). Expectation built from activity and rest enriched by fantasy is the seed of the infant’s discovery of an object.

Winnicott (1992a) insists that contact with external reality, beginning from infancy, is a fantasy of control: “The individual gets to external reality,” he says, “through the omnipotent fantasies elaborated in the effort to get away from inner reality” (130). From internal activity that feels uncontrollable (the scientist’s instinctive faith?), the infant turns to fantasy as escape and in this way makes contact with external reality (the simple occurrences of everyday life?). It is a sequence, Winnicott argues, that moves from a defense against the acceptance of inner unrest and impulse, into “omnipotent fantasy, and flight from some fantasies to other fantasies, and in this sequence a flight to external reality” (130). He concludes that one cannot in good faith compare and contrast fantasy and reality.

Later in life, the infant-become-adult can claim momentary indulgence from others for her enjoyment of creative fantasies for their own sake. Winnicott (1990a) includes creative scientific work as among cultural experiences in which the adult enjoys moments of respite as references to early omnipotent discoveries. The creative scientist enjoys respite “from absolute and never-failing discrimination between fact and fantasy” (107). Winnicott suggests that the scientist, by vocational, ideological, and perhaps even developmental necessity, claims indulgence from others in her handling of fact and fantasy. But can the scientist admit—could Marie Curie admit—that which Winnicott claims all babies must grow up to say: “I know that there is no direct contact between external reality and myself, only an illusion of contact, a midway phenomenon that works very well for me when I am not tired” (114-115). I see in the role of fantasy life in the development of the baby’s contact with reality the question of how fantasy founds an illusion of contact, for instance in the development of Marie Curie’s astonishing discovery of radioactivity.

In the early days of her research Curie referred to her new science of identifying and quantifying radioactive elements and their energy as “the chemistry of the invisible” (2005, 155). Indeed, as Redniss (2010) notes, the scientific preoccupations at the turn of the twentieth century concerned “a series of invisible forces [that] were radically transforming daily life” (52). It is not hard to hear in this characterization an echo of Freud’s (1900) description at the turn of the century of that great invisible force in human development, the unconscious. In the last analysis, it is perhaps difficult to say of these forces whether they were created or discovered by the scientific minds devoted to their study. For Curie (2012) her own discoveries revealed to her “once again, how pure



speculation can lead to discoveries that will be useful later in unforeseen directions” (21). But what is it that makes certain directions in science foreseeable while others unforeseen? Pierre (2001) wrote to Marie in a letter: “What is necessary...is to make the anti-natural thought to which one has devoted one’s self remain dominant and continue its impassable course in one’s poor head” (126). Pierre concludes, and he seems to describe rather than prescribe the life they lead together: “One must make of life a dream, and of that dream a reality” (126). First life, then the dream, and then reality.

Marie Curie’s development is also the development of a science of the unforeseen, an invisible chemistry emergent in the translation of anti-natural thoughts into a dream of reality, which passes for its imaginative resources through the dedicated ventures of fantasy life. The scientist discovers the unforeseen, and then develops from her subjective experience an objective one, which is to say, one that can be shared with others who are themselves free to re-illusion such a thing. But if “it is harder to discover the elements than to develop the science,” as Whitehead (1967) claims, then we might wonder what makes the discovery of elements in science so difficult and what kind imaginative thinking makes it possible (33). What kind of contact exists, after all, between the imaginative thinker in science and the reality she sets out to determine?

Eve Curie (2001) describes her mother as “passing like a stranger across her own life, intact, natural and very nearly unaware of her astonishing destiny” (xvii). “She floated lightly,” Eve pronounces, “in another world” (117-118). The study of development poses a similar question of contact with other worlds, some belonging to the self, some belonging to others, and some shared between us. And even then, in the sharing of worlds, we are following developmental threads, as Marie Curie (2012) herself

signals: “there may be in a life some general direction, some continuous thread, due to a few dominant ideas and a few strong feelings, that explain the life and are characteristic of a human personality” (77). My conjecture is that in giving us the character of a human personality, the thread of Curie’s dominant ideas might also shed valuable light on how the baby’s illusion of contact with external reality is not simply an achievement, but is also an enduring relation constituted and enriched by fantasy life.

### **3.2 From Fantasy to Reality, “...Like Creating Something Out of Nothing”**

My claim is that scientific ideas reference a relationship between the unrest of the scientist’s inner reality and the external reality she imagines she has made contact with as a means of tolerating it. Let’s see if we can glimpse in the scientist’s striking research the basic ingredients of the mind’s earliest ventures on the borderline between force and significance. Born Manya Sklodovska in Russian-occupied Poland and subject in childhood to the confusion and abjection of systemic discrimination and nationalism, Marie Curie was from an early age sensitive to the value of dreams, dissociation and the possible worlds built from theory, fiction, and fantasy. Study was for Manya, as Eve Curie (2001) describes, a chance for momentary “absent-mindedness” that allowed her to put away “for brief moments at a time...the dark phantoms” (27). Through the inherited politics of nationhood Curie began her life engaged in an intensive conflict over the rapport between those aspects of reality that are imposed by and shared with others and those that are discovered and cultivated alone, the fantasies and wishes that color the imagination. Eve Curie recalls a letter her mother wrote as a teenager in which she

describes this aspectual split as between the head and a wall, concluding, “you know that walls are always stronger than the heads which try to demolish them” (73).

Curie will later unsettle her early hypothesis regarding the head’s chances in opposing the wall, observing elemental ways beyond the wall’s structural impasse, but the nature of this disjoint between the strength of her convictions and the obstinacy of reality’s external resistance endures and continues throughout her life to invigorate her commitment to scientific research. Marie Curie (2012) recounts her husband’s own affirmation of this deeply felt conflict they seem to have shared:

‘What would you think,’ he wrote me, ‘of a person who would knock his head against a stone wall with the intention of overthrowing it? Such an idea might be the result of very beautiful feelings, but in realization it would be ridiculous and stupid...I believe, further, that justice is not of this world’ (36-37).

There is a choice on offer here between recognizing the injustice of the wall or justifying one’s beautiful feelings in another world altogether. In either case, the head must reckon with the matter it sets itself up against. For Marie Curie the other world in which she was to posit her beautiful feelings was the world of scientific rumination. In her autobiographical notes appended to her biography of Pierre she remarks on her first encounters with science: “All that I saw and learned that was new delighted me. It was like a new world opened to me, the world of science, which I was at last permitted to know in all liberty” (85).

In a letter written as a teenager Curie expands the terms of her conflict: “I feel everything very violently, with a physical violence, and then I give myself a shaking, the vigor of my nature conquers, and it seems to me that I am coming out of a nightmare...First principle: never to let one’s self be beaten down by persons or by events” (2001, 80). Persons and events take backstage to the young scientist’s object relations. Curie finds the vigor of her nature in the solitude she assumes to be the essential mode of student life. In a poem written after the commencement of her university studies, she writes autobiographically of the student: “She lives, obscure and blessed,/ For in her cell she finds the ardor/ That makes her heart immense/ But the blessed time is effaced./ She must leave the land of Science/ To go out and struggle for her bread/ On the grey roads of life” (117). Obscure and blessed in the land of science, but effaced and struggling on the grey roads of life, Curie’s intellectual development flourished in the perceived contrast between the freedom of thought along the avenues of scientific study and the inhibitions of external reality. I see in Curie’s words a relationality privileging a fantasy of contact with reality over the impasse of contact itself, the land of Science over the grey roads of life.

Winnicott (1990a) understands by fantasy in early life a solution to the infant’s innate feelings of ambivalence: “without fantasy crude expression of appetite and of sexuality and of hate would be the rule. Fantasy in this way proves to be the human characteristic, the stuff of socialization and of civilization itself” (60). Fantasy is a psychical playing out of “crude expressions of appetite” that renders expression itself less crude, or rather, more complex. Following Winnicott’s broader view of development, fantasy is part of the individual’s effort to deal with an incongruity between inner and

outer experience, an effort that launches psychical life and that continues to affect the psyche in adulthood. Through fantasy there is a flight that in an effort to mitigate the intolerable frustrations of inner instinctual reality—the “vigor of our nature” as Curie (2001, 80) puts it—runs into external reality as the very limit of the mind’s reach.

“Creatures who feel as keenly as I do,” asserts Curie (2001), “and are unable to change this characteristic of their nature, have to dissimulate it at least as much as possible” (381). The fantasies that sustain her scientific vocation, as the stuff of civilization, reveal an effort to tolerate a crude developmental conflict between appetite and thought, between what is known and what can be observed under the special lens of science, which can purport under specific conditions to see more than is there.

Taking Henri Becquerel’s accidental discovery in 1896 of the spontaneous emission by uranium salts of mysterious and active rays as the subject of her dissertation research, Marie Curie set about determining the source and nature of this imperceptible radiation. “The study of this phenomenon seemed to us very attractive,” she writes, “and all the more so because the question was entirely new and nothing yet had been written upon it” (Curie, 2012, 45). The question was entirely new, and her hypothesis is radical: Suppose the rays are a fundamental attribute of the substance in question, an atomic property of the element (Goldsmith, 2005). She began her study, then, by examining all known chemical substances for this unidentified property emanating from uranium and thorium, coining the term radioactivity to identify it. Her search for its elemental origin produced no results. The minerals she treated certainly contained a radioactive substance, but if the substance was a chemical element it was as yet unknown.

And so, as Eve Curie (2001) describes: “For the moment this powerfully radioactive substance existed only in the imagination of Marie and Pierre. But it did exist there” (157). Given the meticulous and precise quality of her work and the close observations she made of radioactive phenomena, Marie Curie was convinced of the existence of a new element. But in order to convince the wider scientific community and its public she had to find a way not only to isolate the element, but also to determine its atomic weight. “It was like creating something out of nothing,” she recounts (2012, 91). Marie and Pierre spent the next forty-five months trying to isolate a measurable amount of the hypothesized element. According to Eve (2001), Marie recalls these as the “happiest years of [her] life,” years spent “entirely consecrated to work,” which included whole days “stirring a mass in ebullition, with an iron rod nearly as big as [Marie herself]” (169). For years, then, the Curies devoted thought and physical labor to a chemistry of the invisible. “At this period,” Marie remembers, “we were entirely absorbed by the new realm that was, thanks to an un hoped-for discovery, opening before us... We lived in our single preoccupation as if in a dream” (170-171). In 1902 their dream yielded something essential to our shared reality as Marie Curie succeeded in preparing a decigram of pure radium, her name for the new element, whose atomic weight could now be determined. “The incredulous chemists” had now officially to accept the existence of radium. Curie’s original hypothesis regarding Becquerel’s rays contained a tremendous insight, but I see in it as well a style of tolerating uncertain contact with both observable and unobservable reality in the dissimulation, but perhaps also elaboration, of the “vigor of her nature” in scientific research.

“The very foundation of modern chemistry, Marie could see, was in question,” notes Redniss (2010), “the atom must not be the constant, unchangeable building block of matter scientists had believed it to be” (44). Curie shed firmly established ideas about the composition of matter in the interest of making sense from her intrepid idea about the unseen activities of the atom. I find in her approach two developmental threads: first, belief in the reality of unseen elements envisioned by the mind, and second, that the quiet realm of study and the perfunctory tasks that get us in touch with our theories of the world stand always in relation to a changing reality, psychical and otherwise. It is in this way that the scientist’s instinctual belief, however difficult for the incredulous chemists to weigh, led her into deeper forms of contact with external reality. To this end, while the postulation of the new element and its eventual isolation are monumental achievements in science, perhaps equally monumental is the sense in which belief in the world of science, distinguished from the grey roads of life, was part and parcel of how Marie Curie designed ways and means of making contact in theory with unconfirmed and enigmatic aspects of materiality.

The fantasy that the world of science was in some way distinct from the external conditions of life—as distinct as the head is from the wall—was for Curie a means of taking reality itself as an object of thought and study. Her method of measuring elements according to their radioactivity had significant theoretical implications, furnishing, in her own words, “the first example of a transformation of atoms, independent, it is true, of our will, but at the same time...[reducing] to nothing the theory of the absolute fixity of the atomic edifice” (2012, 57). In her daughter’s words, the atomic transformations, emanations and transubstantiations revealed to thought by Curie’s discovery also

fashioned new narratives for material structuration in the universe: “Motionless in appearance, matter contained births, collisions, murders and suicides. It contained dramas subjected to implacable fatality: it contained life and death” (2001, 197).

Marie Curie’s invisible chemistry is a theory of contact with external reality and a story of human object relations—a flight from some fantasies to other fantasies and in this sequence a flight to external reality. Her discovery poses the developmental question, as Britzman (2016) asks: “How can phantasy cause itself and then go on to have a second act in the work of distinguishing itself from reality? And, how would one decide the difference between thought and phantasy?” (74-75). In the study of invisible rays, thought and fantasy are difficult to distinguish, and the question of what caused Curie’s belief in the new element in the first place is perhaps one that cannot be answered. “Such were the facts which the discovery of radioactivity revealed,” Eve Curie (2001) concludes, “philosophers had only to begin their philosophy all over again and physicists their physics” (197).

But if reality is something we must admit to sharing with others, the scientist gives us a further question: What, precisely, are we sharing when we share reality? The scientist’s style of research opens from an inner reality structured by fantasized relationships with objects leading into a relationship to external reality. “Fantasy is more primary than reality,” writes Winnicott (2001), “and the enrichment of fantasy with the world’s riches depends on the experience of illusion” (153). Was radium as Marie Curie imagined it in a sense more primary than the reality of its invisible rays? The enrichment of this fantasy depends in large part upon the way in which Curie could make use during



the many months devoted to the discovery of the element of the illusion that there is contact between fantasy and reality.

She “was never to be separated from her first gram of radium,” which, as Eve (2001) describes, “never had, and was never to have, a value other than that of her tenacious effort” (200). Throughout her life, Curie could barely keep away from the scientific laboratory in which she spent so much time under the spell of her creative discovery: “Sometimes my courage fails me and I think I ought to stop working, live in the country and devote myself to gardening. But I am held by a thousand bonds, and I don’t know when I shall be able to arrange things otherwise. *Nor do I know whether, even by writing scientific books, I could live without the laboratory*” (373). She is tied to this aspect of life by a thousand invisible bonds. Often neglected in accounts of scientific pursuit is mention of the emotional entrenchment of the work, the primacy of affective bonds, illusions, those relations that condition and promulgate empirical investigation. The scientist makes use of fantasy in her study, of belief in an order of research and development that entraps particular results within the grip of generalizable ideas, and whether the order be given the name Causality or some other theory of constancy, the point here is that the order itself can always be related back, in one way or another, to that affective sequence whereby some fantasies lead to other fantasies before finding their way eventually to external reality.

### **3.3 The Scientist’s “Lack of Subtlety” and the Slow Emergence of the Unobvious**

I have distinguished the scientist’s reflective modality by her approach to research as a relation to objects and a means of theorizing contact with them. In short, my claim is

that the scientist is *scientific* according to the kind of relationship she has to her objects. For instance, it was out of reverence for what Marie Curie and her husband called the “scientific spirit” that they refused for so many years to secure a patent for the near priceless discovery of radium, and it was in accordance with this spirit that they published without censor all the findings and procedural methods of their innovative and extremely valuable research. Marie Curie was adamant: The scientist should not make material gain from the results of her research. The scientist gains, rather, Curie seems to suggest, by the amelioration of her contact with reality in the land of science.

“A great discovery does not leap completely achieved from the brain of the scientist,” observes Curie (2012), “as Minerva sprang, all panoplied, from the head of Jupiter; it is the fruit of accumulated preliminary work” (69). Scientific discovery is steeped in the laborious backwater of the scientist’s life, work, and ideas, and her interest in these occurrences for their own sake. Together with her science and its objects, then, is the *human* science of Marie Curie’s discovery of radioactivity. Roudinesco (2001) describes human sciences as “starting from three fundamental categories: subjectivity, the symbolic, meaning” (101). The human science emergent in contiguity with Marie Curie’s scientific vocation is a translation from the unverifiable to the verifiable, and on into certain experiences of verification, which is to say, from subjective fantasy to a fantasy of objectivity, and on finally to the reality of an object whose perception can be shared with others. Curie’s discovery of radium raises a question for the study of development: What does the construction of a scientific object reveal about the creative subjectivity that discovers it?

The scientist adopts ways of thinking that are at times decidedly *unobvious*, to use Whitehead's word (1967, 19). Scientific belief, Whitehead (1967) qualifies, is an "inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles" (12). He concludes: "Without this belief, the incredible labors of scientists would be without hope. It is this instinctive conviction, vividly poised before the imagination, which is the motive power of research" (12). While Whitehead is concerned here more specifically with the question of how process circumscribes the organism's scientific turn, I see in his philosophy of science a signpost for developmental speculation. In other words, the study of human development explores the whence of this species of belief, which for Whitehead funds the very hope of scientific research. I argue that the infant's fantasy life is the prototype of the scientist's belief in correlation and general principles. Fantasy, returning to a psychoanalytic frame, inaugurates an imaginative capacity for joining material conditions to the creative ideas one has about them. This relation, as Winnicott argues, begins with the simple fact that bodily activity is enriched by fantasy from the start of life. The scientist's fantasy replays the infant's illusion that materiality can feel as though it is a product of the mind, engendering belief in correlativity between subjective conception and objective perception. Marie Curie discovers radioactivity, for instance, by defining a line between what is there (observable) and what there is (unobservable). This frontier is only meaningful provided the fantasy of its inscription can be believed in in the first place.

The scientist's work emerges from an inexpugnable belief, poised before the imagination as a vision of contact between theory and world, between fantasy and reality.

This belief is more than a vocational responsibility; it signifies a developmental achievement. In other words, the adult's scientific conviction has its roots in the infant's fantasy that living means discovering relations between thoughts and things. For Winnicott (1990a) psychoanalytic theory describes the scientist by revealing three narrative lines:

1. The origin of a scientist.
2. The way that scientific research deals with anxiety about fantasy and reality (subjective-objective).
3. The scientific method of the creative impulse, appearing as a new question, i.e. dependent on knowledge of existing knowledge (17).

Psychoanalysis tells a story about the emotional relationship of the scientist to her research questions, about what came before knowledge, and about anxiety over where this knowledge might lead. Marie Curie (2001) was also sensitive to this connection, making a case not only for the resplendency of her object of study, but also for the enchanted means by which she studied it:

I am among those who think that science has great beauty. A scientist in his laboratory is not only a technician: he is a child placed before natural phenomena which impress him like a fairy tale. We should not allow it to be believed that all scientific progress can be reduced to mechanisms, machines, gearings, even though such machinery also has its own beauty...Neither do I believe that the spirit of adventure runs any risk of disappearing in our world.

If I see anything vital around me, it is precisely that spirit of adventure, which seems indestructible and is akin to curiosity (341).

And perhaps the scientist's spirit of adventure is more than akin to the child's impression that the natural world impresses like a fairy tale. In fact, perhaps it is because there can be fairy tales in the first place that there can come to be a sophisticated form of commerce with external reality called the science of radioactivity.

“The fact is that what we create is already there,” Winnicott (1990a) teases at his developmental paradox, adding, “but the creativeness lies in the way we get at perception through conception and apperception” (52). The scientist too, as we have seen, is creative according to the way she gets at perception through conception and apperception. “Creativity belongs to being alive,” Winnicott expands his terms, as a “reaching out in some way so that if an object is in the way there can be a relationship” (41). And yet Winnicott notes that this is still only one half of the story: “The other half belongs to the idea that reaching out physically or mentally has no meaning except for a being who is there to be”—an interest in things through persons (42). It is easy to imagine Marie Curie reaching out for her objects such that there can be a relationship of discovery. But Winnicott urges us to look further, to see the other half of what the discovery of the scientific object assumes but rarely declares: Reaching and relating, both developmental rudiments, have no meaning “except for a being who is there to be,” which is to say, a being who has the capacity to feel and be interested in the meaning of her fantasy of contact. Marie Curie reached out for an imperceptible object she conceived of, and the

reality she describes by reaching out touches the dynamic fantasy life that helps the infant escape inner unrest for outer reality. The object, of course, is not reducible to the scientist's idea of it, and if all goes well, there is disillusionment and a fundamental ungraspability in the fruition of every theory of reality. The development of Curie's science, however, its projects and her ideas, can be read through the achievement of a capacity to feel a creative dynamic between ideas as objects of thought and thinking as a means of making contact with a world created and discovered simultaneously.

Winnicott (1990a) distinguishes the scientist from the poet, both of whom he harbors within himself: "The poet in me reaches to a whole truth in a flash, and the scientist in me gropes towards a facet of the truth; as the scientist reaches the immediate objective, a new objective presents itself" (172). This is the scientist's dilemma: the search for a unifying theory leaves little space, precisely, for the searching self who gives up her place so as to be included within her own theoretical parameters. Nonetheless, as Marie Curie (2001) believes: "the collection of aptitudes required for a genuine scientific vocation is an infinitely precious and delicate thing, a rare treasure which it is criminal and absurd to lose, and over which we must watch with solicitude, so as to give it every chance of fruition" (340). The scientist's aptitude for groping towards facets of the truth must be watched over with solicitude. We might see in this precious and delicate treasure an infantile structuration: interaction, communication, and collaboration with reality through fantasy, with objective perception through subjective conception. Marie Curie creates the nascent science of radioactivity, but she also lives the story of a working, changing mind, in the process of developing, whose scientific projects express and represent what she has found.

For the infant, as Winnicott illustrates, the breast or bottle are created by need and destroyed by satisfaction, which brings with it worries over the object's survival. In infancy the imagination is sensitive to impulse, where reaching out with the arms means creating the world, and then tolerating anxiety re-invents the other one has destroyed in a fit of hunger and despair. In adulthood, the imagination is still sensitive to impulse and subject to fits of despair, where reaching out still carries the value of creative or destructive encounters with the world. Marie Curie helps us to see that it is not out of subtlety that a scientist is scientific, but rather, as Barthes (2010) attributes to Nietzsche: We are scientific, precisely, "out of a lack of subtlety" (161). Curie's lack of subtlety was the dream she envisioned humanity as in need of, and it is how she made a science of unseen activity from the unseeable reality of her inner life. "There is also the need of new impressions," Curie (2001) wrote as an adolescent, "the need of change, of movement and life, which seizes me sometimes with such force that I want to fling myself into the greatest follies" (80). Human folly over new impressions is a fundamentally scientific characteristic, fundamental, more basically even, to what is scientific about being human in the first place.

### **3.4 The Piecemeal Participation of Self in Reality and Reality in Self**

As Eve (2001) recounts, Marie Curie "was never to speak of the hardships and dangers to which she exposed herself during [the four years spent isolating radium]. She spoke neither of her unfathomable fatigues, nor the risk of death, nor of the cruel effect of X rays and radium upon her damaged organism" (304). "Humanity...needs dreamers," Curie (2001) would insist instead, "for whom the unselfish following of a purpose is so

imperative that it becomes impossible for them to devote much attention to their own material benefit” (111). Such unselfishness comes nevertheless at a price. Marie Curie’s creative contact with radioactivity is contact also, and deeply so, with the process of becoming and understanding the self capable of such an encounter. The scientist’s discoveries refer in this way back to the infant’s first scientific investigations. To find any object is to find and also create a searching self, for, as Piaget (2000) observes, “the subject recognizes his own reaction before he recognizes the object as such” (2). The object, then, like the self, is constructed little by little over time. And in this constructive procedure the route to the self, and from the self to its objects, is paved with the affective valence of an imagined, fantasized, relationship between inner growth and outer living.

The stark and desperate realities of the First World War lead Marie Curie to develop and disseminate the science of radiology. Her efforts were nothing short of heroic in adapting radiological technology to meet the conditions of combat. Curie even learned to drive so that she could personally bring the medical benefits of radiology to the front lines of the War in a mobile radiology unit that she herself had a hand in engineering. She was personally responsible for giving X-rays to hundreds of soldiers between 1914 and 1918. Curie worked tirelessly, which is also to say, she worked in and through a constant state of exhaustion. In a way, the scientist’s effort to live in recognition of her objects, and in service of their reality, makes of the self a thing among things. After the War, Curie was asked to write a book on *Radiology in War*, in which, as Eve (2001) notes, “she exalted the good work of scientific discovery, eternal research and its human value” (306). And at the same time, Eve continues:



It is very nearly impossible to discern in this drily technical little book how important were Marie Curie's own initiatives. What fiendish ingenuity she used to find impersonal formulas, what a rage for effacing herself, for remaining in the shadows! The "I" was not detestable to Marie: it did not exist. Her work seems to have been accomplished by mysterious entities which she names by turn "the medical organizations," or else, "they," or, in cases of extreme necessity, "we" (306).

The private passion for the scientific object becomes a rage for effacing the self. The recognition and reverence of the reality of the object concomitantly disavows the subject, the "I," not detestable, simply non-existent.

In infancy, as Winnicott (1990a) outlines, once enough psychological activity is built up from the sense-impressions associated with the repeated turning over of need into desire and desire into creative discovery there can be something resembling memory, which is accompanied by a state "in which the infant is confident that the object of desire can be found, and this means that the infant gradually tolerates the absence of the object" (106). Perhaps the absence of the object defines the scientist's quest as much as the object itself. Where there is exaggeration in the search for and discovery of the object, there may also be exaggeration in the reality the object confers upon the subject. The piecemeal progression whereby an object can be believed in even in its absence, says Winnicott, "starts the infant's concept of external reality, a place from which objects appear and in which they disappear" (106). Over time the infant has countless experiences of desiring, discovering and creating objects, encountering not only primary

needs but also the imaginative capacity to extend the demands of embodiment into an external reality and to see in that reality the potential for creative expression. In these encounters, however, it matters a great deal that the subjective self be counted both as a thing among things as well as the very condition for these relations.

The scientist conceives so as to work with and within a particular and limiting theory of the possible kinds of contact there are with reality. The creativity and originality of the theory enriches and is enriched by a relationship between a fantasy, on the one hand, and the means by which such a fantasy can be pursued according to shared knowledge, on the other. Reality must itself also be played with, broken up, and sometimes destroyed in the interest of what else can be made and found in a world related to the subject's sense of her place and objectivity therein. The scientist's work is an extension and sublimation of the infant's earliest tolerance of absence and frustration, each a potential space for thought as well as for the interpellation of a world that exists outside the mind to which the mind is also subjected.

Insofar as a theory of human development might envision a line of life leading from the precocious infant to the genius scientist I argue as well that Marie Curie's development and the development of the science of radioactivity depend upon her sense of participation within the changing conditions of her life and thought. As Winnicott (1990a) puts it: "we shall distinguish the creative potential [of the individual] not so much by the originality in the production as by the individual's sense of the reality of the experience and of the object" (110). I interpret Marie Curie's sense of the reality of her experience in the laboratory, of radioactivity and radioactive elements, not just as evidence of her ingenuity, obsessionality, or genius, which it may or may not be evidence

of as well. Much more basically, I understand the discovery of radioactivity as an exemplary description of a relationship to experience and to objects that makes of the human mind in development a scientist in creative pursuit of facets of truth.

“Only gradually do we demand of the developing individual,” says Winnicott (1990a), “that there shall be a fully acknowledged distinction between external reality and inner psychic reality” (158). The scientist claims her work as a relic of the infant’s intermediate area of experience between external reality and inner psychic reality, a relaxation of the need for full acknowledgment of the distinction between the two. The scientist makes use of infantile reflective procedures so as to see beyond the wall of the world’s conditions, and if all goes well, without having to knock her head against it first. In doing so, however, there is always the risk of attributing too great a reality to the object at the expense of the subject herself. The subject becomes expendable in the name of the object she seeks to determine.

When the dangerous and detrimental effects of radioactivity upon living organisms were gradually being observed, Curie had a hard time connecting the symptoms to her beloved object. She describes the various physical deteriorations she suffered over the course of her career, which included a weakening of eye sight, “an almost continuous humming, sometime very intense,” in her ears, which “persecutes” (Eve Curie, 2001, 371). But in connecting these ailments to her radioactive objects, she worries not about her own survival, but rather about how the “work may be interfered with—or even become impossible” (371). “Perhaps radium has something to do with these troubles,” she allows, “but it cannot be affirmed with certainty,” she defends (371). Unfortunately, Marie Curie is eventually counted among the victims of her discovery, her

death caused by the ravages of years spent in close proximity to the invasive properties of radioactivity.

In this sense, the story of the science of radioactivity is also a story of obstacles, and perhaps most tragically, of the fatal endangerment of the self in the scientist's contact with reality between thought and things. Obstacles are another way of describing the study of human development: Insofar as development in theory is a fantasy of continuity, obstacles to development are how we come to know development at all. As Adam Phillips (1993) puts it: "Only through knowing what we think of as an obstacle can we understand our fantasies of continuity" (85). Marie Curie's fantasies of continuity regarding her passionate ideas were as much defined by that which inhibited her desire for scientific work as by the force of her desire itself. Furthermore, as Phillips expands, "the desire for the object can be used to mask the desire for the obstacle" (88). Human development is a theory precisely in which objects and obstacles become difficult to distinguish. The infant experiences hunger as an interruption to the quiet state of rest with imaginative consequences. The interruption produces the fantasy of the object created so as to meet the obstacle. Phillips concludes: "The obstacle makes the difference; so in developmental terms it is the obstacle that makes possible the object, that makes possible the idea of someone else...Consciousness is of obstacles" (95, 97).

Of course, there is no deciding whether it was the obstacles to the study of radium or the object itself that defined the reality of Marie Curie's contact with it. My interest, rather, is in the scientist's feelings concerning the reality of the contact, and in the relationship between the individual, her procedures of thought, and the fantasy she makes use of that there can be something called external reality that is shared with others. Marie

Curie figures the development of fantasy and need, which have their borders in the ungraspable contact between force and sense in both inner and external reality. Not only is there a return throughout life from one to the other of these subjective nodes, but there can be no truth in the feeling of one without the sense of the other. And even then, by truth here I mean something along the lines of ordinary everyday belief.

The tale of the discovery of radium is a mythology of inventive genius, but it is also here a mythology for how a category of thought typifies the style with which the developing self conceives of and extends her contact with reality. Marie Curie invented radioactivity as a distinct science and object of study and thought. The subjective consequences of such a phenomenological possibility have as much to do with human development as they do with the development of scientific knowledge. Whitehead (1967) argues that it is a “great mistake to think that the bare scientific idea is the required invention, so that it has only to be picked up and used...An intense period of imaginative design lies between,” (96-97). The intense period of imaginative design that lies between the bare scientific idea and the required invention is what I am calling human development. “It is a process,” Whitehead continues, “of disciplined attack upon one difficulty after another” (97). So too, as our figure of the scientist puts into perspective, is the challenge of coming to understand oneself as subject to change, and as subjected to changing conditions within the mind and without. The scientific idea is developed along imaginative designs that last a lifetime, lying between birth and death, and is also a disciplined attack upon difficulties, frustrations, and obstacles.

Whitehead’s (1967) characterization of the scientist’s modern philosophical dilemma describes a developmental crisis: “You may preserve the life in a flux of form,

or preserve the form amid an ebb of life. But you cannot permanently enclose the same life in the same mold” (188). The scientist creatively encounters that which is waiting for discovery, and she must herself feel real while at the same time searching for convincing contact with a reality that exceeds her capacity to imagine it. She makes use of fantasies of invention so as to meet the conditions of subjectivity. It is unclear if Marie Curie preserved the life or the form, if she managed to adapt her life to the form of her thought or vice versa. I leave this question suspended over a portrait of her development. In 1935, Marie’s daughter Irene produced “the first artificially radioactive element in a little glass tube” (213-214). Curie held the tube with intense joy, in hands burnt with radium. Eve (2001) describes this as the “last great satisfaction” of her life.

### **3.5 The Scientist’s Contributions Radiate**

The scientist’s discoveries represent developmental achievements if we reason from an historical case in the interest of giving depth to the question of what constructing fantasies of object relating has to do with external reality. In what ways is growth of personality related to the subjective sense of continuity between what is created and what is found, and to the imaginative capacity to use the illusion of continuity as a means of theorizing personal contact with external reality? In this sequence fantasy as imaginative elaboration of bodily functioning is a representation of conflict between inner unrest and outer constraint, leading the developing subject from personal to shared reality. As Whitehead (1967) points out regarding the historical stage upon which changes in modalities of thought become epistemological markers: “in our sense-experience we know away from and beyond our own personality” (89). There is the world we know,

emphasizes Whitehead, which is “the internal strain of our personality under the stress of the common world which lies behind” (89). For Marie Curie, the known world comes under strain of an acute form: potential varieties of contact with a world behind the existing conditions of personality and environment. In other words, knowing beyond our own personality is also what it means to develop.

Thinking with Marie Curie on the subject of her discovery of the science of radioactivity, while simultaneously reading her words as saying something about human development diverts the signifying streams that flow through the deep grooves of developmental thought. While the scientist’s search is for “effects,” as Lyotard (1993) reminds us, “the search for a discourse that can produce locatable, predictable and controllable metamorphoses, a search, then for discrimination,” the *use* of the scientist’s discriminating search, on the other hand, is itself a commentary on how modes of reflection reveal developmental processes (45). Marie Curie brings to the surface of history Winnicott’s developmental claim that object relations are at the heart of the human’s reality sense. Curie’s fantasies, however, push at the tentative thresholds of Winnicott’s ideas: He classifies moments of undecidability between subjective conception and objective perception in adulthood as psychical relaxation; while for Curie these moments are demanding opportunities for the extension and enrichment of possible forms of contact with reality, of the human’s means of feeling real in pursuit of meaning and in her experience of objects external to wish. Curie’s life and Winnicott’s theory meet at a borderline that the scientist’s discoveries help to both create and destroy.

Merleau-Ponty (1992) names as the “lived-object” that which “is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather it presents itself to us

from the start as the center from which these contributions radiate” (15). The luminous contributions of Marie Curie to the study and science of radioactivity were not just constructed on the basis of sense experience, but from the lived object of her development, from her capacity for belief in a theoretical world pertaining to the object relations of scientific pursuit as contact between subject and object. I have discussed her mode of reflection under the assumption that certain styles of thought and categories of knowing are related, fundamentally, to the feelings we have about our searching selves, about things, objects and others, and about contact with reality. The facts of the historical figure’s life are difficult to build from in tangible and widely applicable ways, since, as Hannah Arendt (2006) claims, “facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories” (231). And yet the inconceivable particularity of the events of Marie Curie’s life is the stuff of a revealing approach to human development, an attention to wider problems of meaning—interest in things through persons and persons through things—whereby development is not simply a question of capability and achievement, but also of how fantasy life and relationality make from development and discovery something that feels real.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Symbol Formation in “the Curve of an Emotion”: Gathering together James Joyce

#### 4.1 Prologue: The matter of a few holes

A form which he knew for his mother’s appeared far down in the room, standing in the doorway. In the gloom her excited face was crimson. A voice which he remembered as his mother’s, a voice of a terrified human being, called his name. The form at the piano answered:

—Yes?

—Do you know anything about the body?...

He heard his mother’s voice addressing him excitedly like the voice of a messenger in a play:

—What ought I do? There’s some matter coming away from the hole in Isabel’s...stomach...Did you ever hear of that happening?

—I don’t know, he answered trying to make sense of her words, trying to say them again to himself.

—Ought I send for the doctor...Did you ever hear of that?...

What ought I do?

—I don’t know...What hole?

—The hole...the hole we all have...here (147).

—James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*

The hole we all have...here, says the artist’s mother in James Joyce’s novel *Stephen Hero*, the first iteration of his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. What hole then? The navel, perhaps, that hole we all have, symbol for an original separation from the maternal other. Mother and son are forms for each other in the above passage as they reckon together with the question of the body’s matter and with the matter of the body’s meaning. How to make sense of the words that make sense of the matter that comes away from the body? For Joyce’s artist, the body’s limits seem to have a constitutive relationship to limits in understanding. The artist and his mother emerge as forms in relation to the sense of their words regarding a hole we all have. Their words seek an account of the body, of what it is and that which it is not, its matter and the matter of its hole. In a seminar on Joyce, Jacques Lacan (2016) is also drawn to the question of the

relationship to the body: “In no [hu]man is the relationship with the body a straightforward relationship—aside from the fact that the body has a few holes” (128).

“According to Freud,” Lacan continues, “this is even what must surely have put [the hu]man on the path of those abstract holes that have to do with the enunciating of anything whatsoever” (128). Straight forward about the body as a relation, says Lacan, is the fact of its holes. Obscure in this relation, however, is the question of enunciating the meaning of this fact.

Perhaps literature, then, can be described as an exceptional form of the enunciation of the fact of the body’s holes, a style of enunciation that is also a relationship and a filling-in, a composition of matter coming away from a lack. Is literature, in other words, and precisely, the *matter* of the few holes in the human body? As Derrida (1981) argues:

No doubt literature, too, seems to aim toward the filling of a lack (a hole) in a whole that should not itself in its essence be missing (to) itself. But literature is also the exception to everything: at once the exception in the whole, the want-of-wholeness in the whole, and the exception to everything, that which exists by itself, alone, with nothing else, in exception to all. (42)

Treated together, Joyce, the artist, and his figure of the artist, Stephen, comprise a body and a body of work, a whole, as filling a hole, and as an exception to its own wholeness, as containing, even in the enunciation of the relation to the body’s holes, a few additional holes. Joyce writes in *Finnegans Wake*: “If he was not alluding to the whole in the wall? That he was when he was not eluding from the whole of the woman” (90). Joyce’s

vertiginous style grapples in enunciation with the meaning of the body's few holes, alluding to the wholeness lacking once there is separation, elusion, between the forms of mother and artist. "The vagaries of his style are purposeful," writes Stanislaus Joyce in his biography of his brother James, *My Brother's Keeper* (2010):

For him literature was not a comforting pastime that half lulls, half encumbers the conscience. It offered other satisfactions, grim realizations that dethrone tyrannical secrets in the heart and awaken in it a sense of liberation. And of sympathy, too. In the mirror of his art the ugliness of the Gorgon's head may be clearly reflected, but it is cleanly severed and does not turn the beholder's heart to stone. (33)

Literature eludes wholeness by alluding to our holes, but without turning the beholder's heart to stone, enunciating a relation of lost wholeness and separation through the grim realizations that awaken a sense of sympathy. The artist in all cases, with vagarious style, as Marion Milner (2010) contends, is "deeply concerned with ideas of distance and separation and having and losing," not simply with the comfort of a pastime to encumber the conscience, but with "the feelings conveyed by space," and "with problems of being a separate body in a world of other bodies which occupy different bits of space" (13). The artist reflects in the mirror of her art the ugliness of this separation.

The story of the artist's development in the literature that comes under Joyce's name—*Stephen Hero*, *Portrait of the Artist*, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*—is a story of symbolization and substitution. For the artist one thing can always come to stand-in for another—the navel for separation, for instance. Joyce's artists are practitioners in symbol

formation who fashion centers of significance from the holes in who we are and what we know. In the hands of the artist language slides to bridge the perceived gap between the body's few holes and the subjective experience of enunciating this fact, bridging known and unknown in words and symbols: "there being no known method from the known to the unknown, an infinity, renderable equally finite by the suppositious probable apposition of one or more bodies equally of the same and of different magnitudes" (Joyce, *Ulysses*, 823). The artist's development, as Milner argues and Joyce *metaphorizes*, comes in the form of finding the familiar in the unfamiliar, the not-so-straight-forward method from the unknown to the known, finding in the hole the matter of a whole.

The artist's interminable task—the human task, I argue, that makes each of us artistic—is, in a word, the problem of enunciating the holes we all have, in our bodies as much as in our understanding of the relations our bodies ground. In other words, the artist's problem of meaning is the problem of symbolization, the use of symbols to give presence to absence. In the extreme, as Joyce so dizzyingly puts on display, literature is also the image made of the self as the whole of our holes in symbols and words. But when Joyce writes in the epigraph above that there is a hole "here," writing the word "here" to stand in for a hole, the hole is inscribed, in fact, nowhere. Literature, too, is this nowhere. The "here" of the hole in writing *is* nowhere. For Lacan, the nowhere of the hole written as "here" is the consequence of having language at all. In this way, the few holes of the human inaugurate a relationship of symbol formation, a relationship to the eventual and necessary "here" of the hole that is to become speech and writing. The fact

that the body has a few holes also means that the relationship to the body is inscribed in language: from gesture to sign to symbol.

In his seminar, Lacan (2016) asks about Joyce's relationship to his body:

What meaning is to be given to what Joyce gives us an account of?...It's not simply a matter of [Joyce's] relationship with his body, but, if I may say so, the psychology of this relationship. After all, psychology is nothing else but the confused image that we have of our body...It is precisely in imagining this psychical relationship that something of the psyche is affected...In Joyce, there is only something that asks simply to take its leave, to be divested of like a fruit peel. (129)

To ask about the psychical processes that characterize the artistic aspects of the human mind in development is to ask how the psyche is affected by the image we have of the body, a relation of whole and hole, union and separation, out-going and return, or finally, divestiture and deferral through symbol formation. Marion Milner (2010) takes us to the middle of the artist's predicament when she questions: "Why [is] it so difficult to feel about, as well as think about, the separateness or togetherness of objects?" (15). As we will see, this question takes us back to infancy and the union of baby and maternal other that founds the emotional task of thinking the forms separation takes as so many demands upon creativity, or as Milner puts it, our "business of living" (13).

#### **4.2 Act One: A sentimental figure**

James Joyce is here a figure for the distinctive relationship to symbols and words in his exemplary work on the affective investments that structure language in speech and writing. We might classify Joyce's great novels as variations in writing on the theme of a self growing and changing according to changes in the relationship to language—the image of the self as emergent with and within forms of expression. As Badiou (2006) puts it in a discussion of what the philosopher inherits from the artist, “the goal of great artists is to give their thinking the form of a work, and nothing more” (63). Accordingly, Joyce gives over to the subject of human development a particular question: If symbols and words can be counted among transitional phenomena in infancy, animating awareness around the difference between Me and not-Me and the separation between self and other, then how might those practices of imagining, symbolizing, and representing the self throughout life, as the form and work of thought, be characterized among the tasks of human development?

Helene Cixous' (1972) comprehensive study of Joyce, *The Exile of James Joyce*, helps me underline a number of complex associations between the figural artists in Joyce's novels and Joyce himself as figure of the artist. Cixous' text adeptly frays and interweaves the materialist, phenomenological, and literary edges of Joyce's words, works, and life. Together with Cixous' text, I draw from Marion Milner's wonderful autobiographical study *On Not Being Able to Paint* (2010) to help picture the figural interior of Joyce's development with a psychoanalytic vocabulary. Milner's study hinges on the question of the terms of psychical creativity. My work with these two texts in a discussion of Joyce aims, specifically, to draw attention to an associative field between, on the one hand, the relationship to language that is the literary work of James Joyce, and

on the other hand, the lifelong implications of symbolization for human relationality in general.

“Joyce not only feeds the work of art on his life,” Cixous argues, “but also fashions his life so that its reality may already be the image of what is to be written in its image” (xiv). With Joyce, the artist is the image the work of art takes as referent for the development of a self. This imaging of the self in art, I argue, repeats a relation made possible by the transitional object in infancy. My claim is that the artist and the infant share an exile situation, a relation of identification and dis-identification with their primary objects of work and play, imaging both self and other, each created and found, and animating the conflicting needs of human creativity: “the need for separation and no-separation” (Milner, 80).

Cixous (1972) describes Joyce’s style as a consciousness in development observing itself develop. My assumption here is that transitional phenomena in infancy give the basic form of this observational quality, making aesthetic experience possible from developmental transitions and the gradual acceptance of separation between maternal other and infantile self. According to Winnicott, who remains the theoretical frame for this analysis, the infant’s use of the transitional object includes the apprehension and identification of a self as separate from the maternal other. I examine parallels between two iterations of the searching self in development: the infant that each of us were, forming an image of the self in infancy, and the exemplary artist, Joyce, himself a figure for the artist each of us becomes at times in and through our expressions of the need for separation and no-separation.

Stanislaus (2003) writes of his brother: “He maintained that art had no purpose; that all fixed purposes falsify it, but that it had a cause, namely, necessity, the imperative inward necessity for the imagination to re-create from life its own ordered synthesis” (128-129). Joyce emerges in this study as a particularly elusive effect, or symptom, of language and literature. Lacan (2016) asks, “How are we to know what [Joyce] believed about himself?” (63). Joyce’s novels present both autobiographical and fictional positions from which looking back upon the image of the artist is itself a form of artistic commentary. “We’re reduced to sentiment,” Lacan (2016) continues, “because Joyce didn’t say it, he wrote it, and the whole difference lies there.” (64). We can ask, then, what it means to be reduced to sentiment in reading Joyce, where the whole difference in reading lies between speech and writing, between what “they had heard or had heard said or had heard said written” (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 369). Joyce’s beliefs about himself and his art are sentimental in the hands of any researcher, Lacan implies. His texts stage a historical veracity as ornamentation in the effort and virtuosity of a telling that re-creates from life its own ordered synthesis.

History is composed, writes Joyce, only of “those big words... which make us so unhappy” (*Ulysses*, 38). Cixous (1972) translates Joyce’s sentiment: “History is the straitjacket of art, that is, of reality, [Joyce] says in effect” (173). She calls the philosophy that informs Joyce’s poetics one of “anti-history.” The sentiment—Cixous’s regarding what Joyce believes—here offers a suggestion for how to read Joyce and his figures as portraits of development: The use of words shapes the understanding of how words work, and history is always already a historicity of symbols in formation. “I think he wrote to make things clear to himself,” reflects Stanislaus (2003). Expanding the idea, Cixous



adds that Joyce treats “himself and his art under the appearance of human development” (1972, 15). Joyce uses language to tell stories about the use of language in development. *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s last novel and perhaps his most striking example, sets language in motion with sentences that tremble under their own finely composed decompositions and metonymy. His almost fanatical phoneticism in the novel produces a ceaseless barrage of symbolizations upon symbolizations. There is in Joyce’s later works a racing delight in verbal nonsense, the kind of delight, as Milner (1987) notes, one might link to “relief at escape from [the] false dominance of words” (14). Cixous comments on the extent of this escape: “in *Ulysses* and after the sentence itself becomes the scene of experience, in *Finnegans Wake*, the words themselves contain the meaning carried by an ordinary sentence, while the linear construction of the latter is burst asunder and replaced by a kind of verbal galaxy” (606). We can wonder what gives shape to runaway language as we look back from this “verbal galaxy” to see Winnicott’s concept of the transitional object and the role it plays in infantile symbol formation as a means of thinking about what the exemplary artist’s enormously complex symbolic procedures have to do with the no less emotionally valorized—sentimental even—procedures of the infant. Perhaps we can see in these two positions, artist and infant, something of what it means not only to grow into a self, and then along with our selves into adulthood, but to do so always in relation to the symbols and words we use—our “verbal galaxies”.

Symbolization in infancy fastens the capacity for distinction between what matters and what is missing to a relational structure communicated by the care of the maternal other. I see in the symbolic use made of the transitional object by the infant an originary linguistic sign, a symbol used by the baby to help signify and inscribe in

external reality the felt meanings of psychical life. Symbolization refers to an “acceptance of symbols,” Winnicott (2011) holds, so that “one thing ‘stands for’ another, and the consequence is that there is great relief from the crude and awkward conflicts that belong to stark truth” (83). The transitional object in this sense describes a symbolic relation that situates language acquisition in the emotional terrain of presence and absence. “The acceptance of symbols,” Winnicott concludes, “gives elbow room to the child in his or her living experience” (96).

Tarc (2015) calls the human’s “felt, internal situation waiting to be symbolically expressed *psychical literacy*” (28). The concept gives its own elbow room for an important difference between the transitional object and symbolization. As Winnicott (2005) elucidates: “It would be possible to understand the transitional object while not fully understanding the nature of symbolism. It seems that symbolism can only be properly studied in the process of the growth of an individual, and that it has at the very best a variable meaning” (234). And yet we might wonder if the reverse is also true, that the growth of the individual can only be properly studied through the process of symbolization. The artist is a heretic—as Lacan accuses Joyce—precisely because of how she exploits the variability in the meaning of symbolism. But where the study of human development crosses that of the artist’s emotional labor, we can ask as well whether the heretical path of the artist, even in its splendid variability, is already an extension of the infant’s path of symbolization. And if so, what does the laying of such a path mean for what development itself signifies as a lifelong relationship to the uses of language as separation and as forms of union?

### **4.3 Act Two: Unintegration and the emotional curvature of symbolization**

Winnicott (1990a) postulates that before there can be integration in infancy there is an “unintegrated state out of which integration takes place,” a state he characterizes as a “stage without awareness,” entailing “a lack of wholeness both in space and time,” in which “the centre of gravity (so to speak) of the self shifts from one impulse or sensation to another” (116). In other words, at the theoretical start, the infant is not yet a collection of impulses but rather a diffuse distribution of sensations. The internal factors that define unintegration, as Winnicott maintains, are also those that promote eventual integration. After integration is a fact, however, feelings of unintegration threaten the self with depersonalization, and so in the creative activity of the adult, disintegration (not feeling oneself) can serve as much to defend against unintegration (not feeling a self at all) as against integration (feeling completely, irremediably, and only oneself).

“Disintegration,” Winnicott (1990a) explains, “is along lines of cleavage set up by the organization of the inner world and the control of inner objects and forces” (120). Integration refers, then, among other things, to the organization in the imagination of inner objects and forces, but also, as Milner (1987) points out, to a degree of “confusion between inner and outer realities” (14). As integration begins so too dawns the dilemma of deciding where instinctual experience comes from and where it might lead. Following Melanie Klein, Winnicott posits an original aggression in the infant that both precedes and circumscribes the integration of the personality, aggression that is “almost synonymous with activity,” as a “matter of part-function” (204). The source of the human’s original aggression, says Winnicott, is instinctual experience: “aggression is part

of the primitive expression of love” (205). Love is the aggressive consequence of part-functioning in the search for a foundation over time.

In unintegration proceeding toward integration, therefore, there are aggressive expressions of love, on one hand, and there is a maternal other’s technique of care, on the other. The infant is held together over these early phases of living, says Winnicott. The child’s acceptance of symbols comes on the wave of a maternal holding function, “like a cork upon the tide, ” to use the artist’s image (Joyce, *Portrait*, 52). Stanislaus extends the metaphor, stating that in the Joyce household “one had always the impression of being in an open boat on a choppy sea” (250). Holding, in any event, as Winnicott (1990a) claims, means there is a “chance to work through the consequences of instinctual experiences,” a time factor that attributes meaning to the force of experience, and a sense of continuity that joins the experiences of feeling, or being, to those of doing (263). Here we glimpse the perspicuity of Adam Phillip’s (1993) odd question: “Is the first thought the absence of the mother or the presence of time?” (97). If unintegrated aggression is held over of a phase of living by the maternal other, then the organization of inner objects and forces can eventually come to mean the organization of that signifier called the self. Perhaps there is a parallel, then, between how the infant and her maternal other piece together a self from a holding environment and the question of why the artist creates anything at all: Beyond filling-in a lack (hole), the artist recreates the dissolution of borderlines between inside and out. Milner (2010) discovers in her own artistic efforts a return to “this idea of there being no fixed outline...no boundary between one self and another self, it brought in the idea of one personality merging with another” (29).

Cixous (1972) argues that in Joyce's portrait of the development of the artist "the original individual is seen as rhythm, as a relation of part to whole, as the curve of an emotion...not a person with a human appearance and characteristics that can be described, but a fluid movement, a consciousness in time" (213). Integration has at its existential fringe this question of the appearance of the self: a rhythm and relation of part function that underlines subjectivity with the curve of an emotion. "Since rhythm itself consists of a two-ness," Milner (2010) speculates, "a continuing relation between two differences...does it perhaps not represent the most important fact about the way the pattern making force inside works, in active relation to the environment, to achieve a wholeness of the organism?" (129-130). In Winnicott's theory of the self, it is as a reflection in the face of the maternal other that the self appears, a certain rhythm of two-ness appears in the relation between two differences, an image curved by the emotional situations of symbol formation and techniques in care. The symbol is accepted and one personality merges with another in the conflict between the need for separation and no separation, simultaneously felt. "The sense of self comes on the basis of an unintegrated state," writes Winnicott (2005), "which is lost unless observed and mirrored back by someone who is trusted and who justifies the trust and meets the dependence" (82). The appearance of the self, both in child development and then in artistic expression, raises this question of how artistic activity in adulthood conjures infantile integrative experience, confusion over inner and outer realities, and the appearance of the self under construction and in relation to the other who has met, and then begun to fail in meeting, this dependence.

Winnicott describes the self with reference to a metaphorical organization that localizes impulse. For instance, the maternal other is used both as a symbol of the self and then gradually also as a metaphor for what the self can be like—self as other, other as self—as form and meaning develop. In other words, the image of the self in the face of the other is a symbol formation the infant uses metaphorically. Milner (1987) argues that the first function of the image is the distortion of “outer reality into the shape of our own unacknowledged wishes and fears” (14). In this way, if there can be a relation of resemblance between wishes and fears, on one hand, and the images made from outer reality, on the other, then there can be a creative use of symbols. Paul Ricoeur (2008) interprets “the work of the imagination” as that of schematizing metaphorical attribution, “it gives an image to an emerging meaning” (169). The work of the imagination in infancy, which grows into the work of the creative imagination in adulthood, is preceded by a relation whereby images are given both to emerging meanings and to merging personalities, in a rhythm of two-ness. “White breast of the dim sea. The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings merging their twining chords. Wavewhite wedded words shimmering on the dim tide” (Joyce, *Ulysses*, 9). This relation, development by metaphORIZATION, precedes and precipitates the integration of the self.

“It’s something fails us,” writes Joyce, “First we feel. Then we fall” (*Finnegans Wake*, 627). After floating upon a tide of unawareness and lack of wholeness the infant enters a sea of emergent meanings that gravitate around images of the self and other. The something that fails us, however, is that the self is discoverable only at the expense of being and meaning everything else, everything that is not the self. In other words, the infant feels the loss of a certain kind of contact with the maternal other, of being merged

with her, precisely in the apprehension and organization of a self. Such is the nature of integration: the image of the self comes as substitute for what Freud (1927) calls the “oceanic feeling” of being one with the universe. The maternal other makes the infant’s sense of self both real and bearable, but the awareness of the self is an awareness, by definition, of separation from the other. Or, to put it the other way around, the awareness of separation is what the self at first *is*. Ultimately, the maternal other holds the baby together so that in creative apperception the infant can apprehend an image of the self as separate from the living plenitude of an external otherness that comes to be known gradually under the symbols that name a shared reality.

Cixous (1972) describes Joyce’s treatment of the maternal other in his novels as a “conscious relegation,” which shows “that she constitutes a threat to James as artist, by the paralyzing forces that she represents” (37). We might wonder why the maternal other represents paralyzing forces for the artist. “My mother became for my brother...the woman who fears,” writes Stanislaus (2003, 238). In the Kleinian model the paralyzing forces that the maternal other represents have to do with guilt feelings over symbolizing separation, as though the acceptance of symbols is concomitantly a rejection of the presence they symbolize. For Klein, guilt is the first affective form the symbol has, guilt over the feeling that the maternal other has been destroyed by awareness of separation from her. The phantasy of the maternal other threatens the artist with the force of his own guilty reminiscence, the force of a fear over the consequences of symbolization. In the Kleinian mode, symbol formation is pervaded by the anxiety that separation from the maternal other is created by aggressive instincts. In her view it is not just the artist, but every symbolic production, every artistic project, even that of the scientist or philosopher,

that develops from anxiety over losing touch with the maternal other. The artist re-writes the space between he and his mother in a reparative effort and the desire for union, which the symbol comes between.

To this end, we might see in Joyce's written account of a dream about his mother not long after her death a creative correlation between the paralyzing forces of guilt over the loss of the other and the spurring force of symbols producing revenants:

She comes at night when the city is still; invisible, inaudible, all unsummoned. She comes from her ancient seat to visit the least of her children, mother most venerable, as if he had never been alien to her. She knows the inmost heart; therefore she is gentle, nothing exacting; saying I am susceptible of change, an imaginative influence in the hearts of my children. Who has pity for you when you are sad among the strangers? Years and years I loved you when you lay in my womb. (cited in Cixous, 1972, 29)

The maternal visitor, unsummoned, comes nonetheless from her ancient seat to face the pitiful artist, she comes *as if* she were not alien, *as if* there had been no separation. Joyce's dream references change and imaginative influence, reparative possibilities, and a promise of building something new from the harrowing avowals of reminiscence. The dream also signals a return to the womb, to the world-before-you-were-born of the mother's body. If we follow Klein's (2002) idea that the outside world symbolizes "the mother's body in an extended sense," the artist's dream in writing can here be read as a substitution extending in symbolic form the significance of a separation constitutive of the artistic self—a hole become literary matter (232).



“Gossip accused [Joyce] of having hastened [his mother’s] death by his cynical behavior,” notes Cixous (1972), “and he commits a matricide throughout the work which tortures him with remorse” (119). “But the ironical implication here,” she argues later, “is that one cannot really leave one’s mother...[*she*] do[es] not leave *him*” (475). Joyce’s dream returns the maternal other to the self. Her image comes *as if* it were not alien to his own. Joyce’s alleged guilt over the fate of his relationship to his mother draws attention to his production of symbolic substitutions for their separation. Stanislaus (2003) cites their mother’s death as the cause of the “ordeal of the spirit” that became of James Joyce’s life, fortifying in the artist a “sympathy with the cross-purposes and contradictions of life,” which divided James against himself (96). “Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother’s love is not,” says the artist in Joyce’s *Portrait*: “Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels? But whatever she feels, it, at least, must be real. It must be. What are our ideas or ambitions? Play. Ideas!” (241-242). The salient point here, though, is not the artist’s success in turning guilt into creative writing, but rather the more basic developmental question: What comes after guilt? As Derrida (1997b) asks:

If the relation to the other presupposes an infinite separation, an infinite interruption where the face appears, what happens where and to whom does it happen, when another interruption comes at death to hollow out even more infinitely the first separation, a rending interruption at the heart of interruption itself? (9).

Cixous (1967) remarks: “The child who begins to speak is guilty straightaway, from the very fact of speaking” (164). There is a fundamental relation between symbolizing experience and acknowledging with a certain remorse the constitutive distance between self and other, between accepting the symbol and rejecting that which it symbolizes. The paradox is that recognizing this gap, this hole we all have, an infinite interruption, is both how absence is felt as well as how it is attributed the presence of a symbolic meaning. Recognizing separateness, as Milner (1987) notes, can result “in a block in that recognition of duality which makes it possible to accept that a symbol is both itself and the thing it stands for, yet without being identical with it” (68). And yet this paradox opens, as Cixous argues, into “the limitless space of the imagination, [as] the alibi for transgression by writing” (513). The artist’s guilt in particular, then, has to do with what is meant by words like talent and style, arising from a particular habit of making images from what Kristeva (1989) calls an irredeemable sadness and desperate separation from the maternal other, “a loss that causes [the infant] to try to find her again, along with other objects of love, first in the imagination, then in words” (6). In this way, to be artistic is to be engaged in a process of rediscovery and re-creation, of creation and discovery after anxiety and guilt, first in the imagination, then in words.

My conjecture is that the work of art involves a sorting out of instinctual experience and symbolic objects similar to that of the infant occupied with integrative experience, risking subjective return to the fantasies of part functioning, of aggressive love lacking in awareness, and of anxiety over first separatings. Winnicott (2005) argues, however: “If the artist (in whatever medium) is searching for the self, then it can be said that in all probability there is already some failure for that artist in the field of general

creative living. The finished creation never heals the underlying lack of sense of self” (73). Despite similarities in the imaginative work of the artist and the infant, then, Joyce’s writing does not offer the researcher a means back to the psychology underlying his sense of self. What it does offer, however, is an account of the relationship to images and words by which the apprehension, representation and use of a sense of self as an image is developed. Revealed in this account is a particular way of working with an image of the self in development as both an inner and an outer object, including the confusion that arises between them. “For might not this power to spread around objects of the outer world,” writes Milner (2010) of creative power, “be something that was nevertheless part of oneself, might it not be a way of trying to deal with the primary human predicament of disillusion through separation and jealousy and loss of love?” (65-66).

We can assume that integration means something else to the adult than to the infant, but we should not assume that it means nothing at all after infancy. The image of the self as the artist’s creative conflict is a relation that chronicles the link between instinctual experience, emotional life, and the reflective and representational procedures that initiate subjective shifts in the direction of what are called integration and separation. “The capacity to create the inner object,” Milner (1987) elaborates elsewhere, “must, I think, come from frustration as you suggest and simultaneously must be accompanied by a growing feeling about a ‘self’ as the other end of experience” (61). The artist is a figure for the human proclivity to get in touch with, organize, and spread around the objects of crude impulse and growing feelings about a “self” as two ends of an experience that can be tied together. As Winnicott (1990a) maintains, to get a “glimpse into the task of

sorting out after instinctual experience we must refer to the work of artists who... become able to risk nearly the full force of what is there in human nature” (77).

Winnicott’s concept of unintegration and his theory of integration supply the study of symbolization with an apposite vocabulary for emphasizing interest in the work of imagining the infant’s experiences of developmental transition over and above theorizing the cause and effect of progressive self-realization. But it is from his contemporary Melanie Klein that Winnicott derives the rigorous theoretical ground for his ideas about symbolization. Klein (2002) makes the strong assertion that “symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent, since it is by way of symbolic equation that things, activities and interests become the subject of libidinal phantasies” (220). One thing stands for another in the libidinal fantasies that accompany early psychic functioning, and while what we refer to as the talent of the artist is not reducible to fantasies of symbolic exchange, we can hold nonetheless that to ask about the meaning of a word like talent is necessarily to ask about the nature of symbol formation and symbolic exchange.

“Side by side with the libidinal interest,” Klein (2002) argues, “it is the anxiety arising in the phase that I have described which sets going the mechanism of identification” (220). Libido and anxiety work side by side in symbolization, producing identifications. “Not only does symbolism come to be the foundation of all phantasy and sublimation,” Klein concludes, “but more than that, it is the basis of the subject’s relation to the outside world and to reality in general” (221). Identification as an integrative apparatus is tied up from the beginning with the give and take of the psychology of the symbol. Klein’s insight into sublimation and talent, as they touch upon the artist’s own

work of symbolization, tell a story not so much about inspiration from without, but rather about entrenchment, fixation, and the emissive functions of libido and anxiety. The infant and the exemplary artist, both, are possessed and dispossessed in development by the symbols that relate an image of the self to external reality.

Symbolization portends both integration and disintegration, coming sometimes to foment and sometimes to prevent proximity between the self and those symbols instrumentalized in the interest of subjective cogency in relation to objects and external reality. The trouble is that in symbolization to employ the self and to be the self—to *come* together and to *be* together—are mutually exclusive psychological positions. The self comes apart in development, but also *becomes* apart, that is, becomes in parts, which as Klein notes, can be a lonely state of mind. As a figure for symbolization, the artist characterizes this complicated human task of turning a collection of impulses into the self's creative projects, subjecting the self to its infantile conditions through fictional flourishes.

In Klein's view the formation of the symbol provides the infant with a reparative capacity to use anxiety around loss and separation to enrich identificatory sublimation. In this way, the infant's first symbols are fundamentally linked to first feelings about absence. "If symbol formation is to emerge, the object must be lost," writes Britzman (2015, 61). The use of symbols for the expression of what is missing is a libidinal economy that measures and represents a historicity of the self's gains and losses. In a certain sense, when the symbol emerges it does so first as a substitute for the maternal other who is felt to be absent or unavailable, physically or psychologically, lost or destroyed in unconscious phantasy. For Klein anxiety over these first experiences of loss

and separation are what catalyze the creative impulse to symbolize anything at all. Being a self instead of having the other is the anxious infant's first artistic production.

The study of symbolization, then, as Winnicott (2005) puts it, is the study of the experience and place of a "separation that is not a separation but a form of union" (132). The human proclivity for artistic play maintains a situation of separation so as to organize the self along the emotional channels of symbolic return. The pain of loss aroused by the awareness of separation, "knowing full well that it is unchangeable," as the artist declares in *Portrait*, "is the greatest torment which the created soul is capable of bearing" (Joyce, 128). In a way, however, the torment must be kept alive so as to keep active, in effect, the capacity for signifying those forms of union that promote the integration of the self. "What mattered to Joyce," for instance, writes Cixous (1972), "was the necessity of maintaining... a situation of separation which would enable him to feel himself condemned to exile" (511). The artist symbolizes distance as a careful delineation of his wishes over the meaning of proximity. Exaggerated use of the forms of separation is resistance to the threat of meaninglessness that lurks in the hollow of every absence. We don't fear the matter that comes away from the hole but the fact of its coming away.

Winnicott (2005) argues that awareness of loss through separation is sometimes accompanied by "the exaggeration of the use of a transitional object as part of denial that there is a threat of its becoming meaningless" (20). The use made of the object as symbol induces psychical transfers between libido and anxiety on one side, and sense and significance on the other, which allows for an indefinite series of substitutions such that no one object—Me or not-Me—risks a devastating loss of meaning. Winnicott remarks upon a young patient's use of string: "One had to observe that although he 'brooked no

substitute' he was using the string as a symbol of union with his mother. It was clear that the string was simultaneously a symbol of separateness and of union through communication" (58). The object makes possible an area of symbolic play with what Winnicott calls "personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects" (64). To "brook no substitute", of course, is to be deeply concerned with the felt hazards of substitution. Symbolization makes possible exchanges of absence and presence through identificatory experience that animate and keep alive the relation between self and other. Supposing that words too can be used as early transitional phenomena, the inventiveness of the artist can be pronounced as one of the developmental destinies of the child's exaggerated use of symbolism. The artist's symbols are vibrant relics of the infant's transitions between separateness and union.

The transitional object is overdetermined by the multiple meanings the infant creates for it on her way to the acquisition of language as a situation of separation and return between self and other, the texture of which is long organized along the identificatory lines of libido and anxiety—the tide and wind of symbolization, to use Joyce's image—making of the self both a signifying subject and a signifiable object. Joyce writes: "These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" (*Ulysses*, 55). The integration of the self silts with the heavy sands of language as an object relation of signs and symbols. The infant comes to learn that she must at times brook substitutes, that the symbol is at once both an affirmation and disavowal of that which it stands for: self or other, object or absence, hole or matter. "Thus the original tremendous primary drive to physical union with another living being," Milner (1987) synthesizes, "has been able to transform itself into interest in every conceivable and inconceivable thing in the

universe—by means of the process of symbolization” (214). The work of art, as Joyce’s artist claims in *Ulysses*, is work precisely on the theme of this human quiddity, founded, I argue, in infancy: “Yes, everything will find itself in me, without me” (63).

The world of objects is both joined together and picked apart by symbolic exchange. “It could be said,” however, Winnicott (2005) argues, “that with human beings there can be no separation, only a threat of separation; and the threat is maximally or minimally traumatic according to the experience of the first separatings” (145). The threat of separation threatens with the destruction of meaningful ties between what is there (belonging to the self) and what there is (belonging to the world), which includes the difference between what there *shall* be and what there *can* be as part of the wider difference in the whole attitude to reality between expectation and wish.

Cixous labels the artist an exile, a title that well describes the situation of symbol formation in infancy: To symbolize instinctual experience and to integrate the self is to be cast away from the maternal other, to become alien to her. The self is discoverable only as exile of a maternal holding function to which she can then return only symbolically, only in gestures, signs, and words, *as if* there had been no separation. “Each of us is an exile to every other,” writes Cixous (1972), “and while appearing to bring about some reconciliation, each of us is blindly groping for the space which constitutes the difference and the separation from others” (541-542). The creative act assumes there is no opposition between the self and the otherness of its image, between ontic presence and symbolized absence. In creative play subject and object concatenate, *there can be no separation*—space is omitted altogether.



#### 4.4 ACT 3: The value of words and the desire to write

The artist both in Joyce's *Portrait* and in *Ulysses*, Stephen Deadalus, confers a particular value upon words, which appears to mark a relation of proximity between the having of mood and the holding forth of a certain discursive style. According to Stanislaus (2003), *Moods* was the title James gave to his first volume of poetry, his interest being not simply in literary exercises, "but more significantly," writes Stanislaus, "with the mood that prompted them" (259). The artist marks with words the force of a relation between mood and symbol. In perhaps one of the most stunning studies of literary exercise and mood, *Black Sun*, Kristeva (1989) gives an account of moods as "inscriptions, energy disruptions," that "lead us toward a modality of significance that, on the threshold of bioenergetic stability, insures the preconditions for (or manifests the disintegration of) the imaginary and the symbolic" (22). Joyce writes the figure of the artist as tarrying at this threshold, his instruments are affect as precondition for symbolization—moored to words by moods. "He sought in his verses," Joyce writes of the artist in *Stephen Hero*, "to fix the most elusive of his moods" (34). In Joyce's words mood is the curve and emotional rhythm of the symbol in formation. Stephen questions in *Portrait* the value of his words: "Was it their colours, that harmonized the phrase and the day and the scene in a chord? No, it was not their colours, it was the poise and balance of the period itself" (166). For the artist, the value of words is a relation of poise and balance in rhythm with the disruptions of mood. Milner (1987) argues that the artist finds in art "a method, in adult life, for reproducing states that are part of everyday experience in healthy infancy" (98). The artist returns to the infant's own exile-situation where the symbol gives the irreducible space between self and other, but as a form of union.

Between words and moods are the balancing movements of bioenergetics and signification that under a certain stability image the self in development. Artist and infant, both, take the side of the “rhythmic rise and fall of words” (*Portrait*, 165).

“Have mood! Hold forth!” (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 414). Such is the artist’s call, to have and to hold while at the same time being had and held between moods and words, “where flash becomes word and silent selfhood” (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 267). In this way, the sorting out of the sense of self amidst moods and words is a way of designating by language a fundamental relationality not only for the infant for whom integration and symbolization are a theoretical start, but also for the adult, for whom the sense of self is often a question of symbolic exploration in the modalities of significance.

To denote by language an object relations is to situate words and signs, as Cixous (1972) does, “between the self and the world; words define the ‘otherness’ of that world, its nature and its horizons” (360). The artist recreates an infantile relationality with words, felt as strange because of a correlation between meaning and existence that is, at bottom, incomprehensible. In other words, to be artistic is already to have capitulated to the otherness of language. “To be conscious of a strangeness in regard to reality,” says Cixous, citing Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist*, “is the first step towards the transposition of existence into language, towards seeing in words the qualities and the mystery of objects” (363). The transitional object as an originary linguistic sign inaugurates this first step in the transposition of existence, mood, into language, making of every self an artist-to-be and of every relationship to language a creative developmental supply. For “ultimately,” as Milner (2010) suggests, “it is perhaps ourselves that the artist in us is trying to create;

and if ourselves, then also the world, because one's view of the one interpenetrates with one's view of the other" (158).

As a figure for the study of development the artist exemplifies the question of why the human symbolizes the self, or more specifically, why the human symbolizes the self in the process of symbolization. What kind of desire compels the artist to image the self? Is the artistic desire to symbolize no more than the exaggerated use of the human need to do so? Is the image of the self in writing necessary to creativity in development? And finally, what can the desire to write the self tell us about what it means to develop? Does development require that the self be written? "The world, mind, is, was and will be writing its own runes for ever...on all matters that fall under the ban of our infrarational senses" (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 19-20). The runes of the world are forever being written, producing subjectifying relations at the threshold between the infrarational experience of libido and anxiety and the suprarational structures of language and culture. Writing signs and words creates and discovers both world and mind in one and the same gesture. Or, as Joyce's artist might say: The world is written of the mind in as much as the mind is written of the world.

The artist's desire to write is not purely a desire to represent life, to metaphorize a living world with an external reality as referent. The desire to write is a desire to recreate life out of life, to bring the world anew into itself, supposing one's view of the world interpenetrates one's view of the self. "I desire," proclaims Stephen in *Portrait*, "to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world" (251). This loveliness, as I have argued, is not an object but a relation, not a subject but a symbolizing quest for inter-subjectivity. As Milner (2010) expands, "what the artist...is doing, fundamentally,

is not recreating in the sense of making again what has been lost (although he is doing this), but creating what is because he is creating the power to perceive it” (189).

“Welcome, O life!” announces Stephen as Joyce’s *Portrait* ends and, presumably, as the artist in earnest begins: “I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (253).

Writing returns the artist to an exile situation for the millionth time as condition for the integration of the self, that theoretical start in which symbolic exchange first usurped the perceived opposition between presence and absence.

The artist repeats a question at the heart of infantile investments in symbolization, as Cixous (1972) asks: “Is life or literature the first temptation?” (94). “The first motive behind the necessity to write and to be an artist,” she elaborates, “is not purely the manifestation of a desire to create for the sake of creating...but, on the contrary, the creative impulse is caused by a painful encounter with real life” (396). Life and literature tempt the self with the redemptive promise of putting back together that which has been parted. And there can be no *first* temptation since transitional phenomena in infancy leave open the question of the meaning of the self as discoverable because real, on the one hand, and symbolic because created, on the other.

The artist’s desire to write arises from of a desire to return in exile to the image of the self as separate from the other. Desire expresses a species of denial. “Our subjectivity to a life of language,” writes Tarc (2015), “is both hospitable and alienating...The other’s language gives us a self as it voids the self” (118). There is inherent in this conception a fundamental tension between speech and writing: both are hospitable and alienating, both give the self from the position of the other, but where speech claims a certain presence,

that of a speaking subject, writing is a deferral of such a claim. The artist comes to writing in the interest of deferral, both hospitable and alienating.

Lacan (2016) argues that Joyce imposed “on language itself a sort of fracturing, a sort of decomposition,” in response to “a certain relationship with speech” that was “increasingly imposed upon him—namely, this speech that comes to be written while being broken apart, pulled to pieces” (79). The decomposition of language in the written art of James Joyce is the site of a developmental wager that puts a life of language—both integrative and disintegrative—in the undecidable terms of Winnicott’s transitional object: Subjective freedom and inhibition, *both*, are created and discovered in the polysemic properties of the symbol. Joyce gives account of this undecidability in *Finnegans Wake*:

The prouts who will invent a writing there ultimately is the poeta, still more learned, who discovered the raiding there originally... What can't be coded can be decoded if an ear aye seize what no eye ere grieved for. Now, the doctrine obtains, we have occasioning cause causing effects and affects occasionally recausing altereffects. Or I will let me take it upon myself to suggest to twist the penman's tale posterwise. (482-483)

The artist defers: What can't be coded is “decoded”: Writing the image of the self, which recauses the altereffects of a separation, is the penman's tale posterwise. In other words, recreating the image of the subject in formation with an objectifying look back upon the self is always the story the artist will have told, her “postcreation,” as Joyce puts it, once she has left speech to its own devices in writing.

Living by the pen, the artist reverses the valuation that would ground meaning in essence as opposed to displacement: “One’s only owned,” writes Joyce, “by natural rejection” (*Finnegans Wake*, 252). The artistic gesture is carried out along this line: re-appropriation of a certain refusal and of the natural rejection that puts meaning between union and separation. The artist retreats so as to repeat not just the guilty fault of a separation but the production of its meaning as a form of union. For Cixous (1972) the artist begins “from a retreat,” and the work of art stems from an “interiorization of the fault” of this retreat (8). “The three virtues of the artist’s behavior,” Cixous goes on, “silence, exile, cunning—are related to stories of interiorization and duplicity” (8). The becoming meaningful of separation, for the artist, is a secondary conferral of meaning made possible by interiorization and duplicity in the form of an exile repeated through symbolization and substitution. Symbolization defers absence with a particular form of presencing. The artist writes with one finger pointed at the moving image of the self in the mirror, seeing in her image the reflection of a separation become meaningful only by having been looked back upon, an image of the self served only in the interest of what it may serve thereby. With Joyce, says Cixous, we encounter the question of a permanent duplicity, of “the self-portrait of the artist, of the coming and going of the look, of the self, of the mirror and the self in the mirror” (4). Or as Joyce’s artist puts it in *Ulysses*: “Drawing back and pointing,” Stephen says with bitterness: “It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked looking glass of a servant” (*Ulysses*, 6). The cracked looking glass of a servant, symbol of Irish art, symbolizes as well the artistic subject in formation: In the hands of the reader of what Joyce offers an account of the cracked looking glass of a

servant images the divide between the self discovered in development and created in separation.

The artist broods in *Ulysses* over this question of his identity and development, over the changing forms of existence and destiny: “But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms,” he parses out, “I, I and I. I.” (243). Joyce images a consciousness in development; or rather, the artist figures a specular gap between self and image as a form of union. Stephen symbolizes this union under everchanging forms: “As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image” (*Ulysses*, 249). But it is not a matter of taking the artist’s word for it; Joyce writes both “I and I,” weaving and unweaving his image in the repetition of a single letter. The weave of Joyce’s image does not amount to this or that claim about the artist’s symptomatic integration, but rather gives room “to analyze the mechanics of his own creation” (Cixous, 1972, xii).

Cixous (1972) notes that in each of Joyce’s three major works—*Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*—an artist serves as mouthpiece as a way of revealing “the very instruments of its genesis” (xii). In the artist’s writing, as in those tendencies of the human mind that make it possible to denote by a certain activity an artistic gesture or aesthetic nature, “one must always look for both the finished form and that which precedes it, the form in progress” (Cixous, xii). “Similarly,” Cixous concludes, “one will find the finished [hu]man as well as the [hu]man in the process of forming [herself or] himself, at every stage of development” (xii). What the artist produces is a text that bears witness in a particular way to the work in progress of human development, bearing

witness through symbolic exchange to the self's experience of separation as so many integrative and disintegrative forays, so many finished forms and works in progress. Milner (2010) concludes her own study of learning to paint by accepting "the idea that a work of art is necessarily and primarily a symbol" (185). James Joyce seems to suggest a step further, as Stanislaus (2003) recalls: "'Life itself is a symbol,' he said, quoting a reply of Isben's to one of his critics who had objected to a symbolism in his dramas" (132). What makes each of us an artist is our capacity to make from the creations and re-creations of our experiences in development the symbolism of our lives.

Artistic expression is that which expresses itself without "being caught in the form of expression," says Cixous (1972, 627). Joyce's work, she argues, "is to be an imitation of life that replaces life" (627). The form of Joyce's expression is not representation but recreation. Perhaps this claim can also be made on the subject of style, on the style particular to artistic minds and common among the artistic disposition of the human mind: The form of artistic expression is peculiar not necessarily for the meaning it enunciates, but rather for how it worlds the enunciating subject, for how a desire for conception, to paraphrase Milner (2010), develops into perception (32). The artist establishes an order, writes Cixous, "in which it is [s]he who speaks and the world that echoes [her or] him" (279). After all, there can be no worldless literature. Artistic, literary, or writerly style, in this way, is the symbolic rhythm of subjectivity in the process of positing a self in the world. According to his brother, Joyce held style "good or bad, to be the most intimate revelation of character" (Joyce, 2003, 167). The artist's duty is the interpretation of the style with which reality worlds the self and the self in turn worlds the reality of experience. For Deleuze and Guattari (2004) style is "the moment



when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but by what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire” (133). The artist’s relationship to language is defined by how the desire to write causes language to move, flow, and to explode, to imitate and then replace the world in the production of a subjective object newly inhabitable.

“My childhood bends beside me,” says Stephen in *Ulysses*, the artist’s image doubling over itself to look back: “Too far for me to lay a hand there once or lightly” (34). Separation is always a form of union in the work of art. The artist knows all too well: That which is out of reach returns nonetheless with the significance of an absence, like matter coming away from a hole. Joyce’s image shimmers again in *Finnegans Wake*, almost refining itself out of existence: “From the night we are and feel and fade with to the yesterselves we tread to turnupon” (473). The yesterself is turned upon in writing, impressed with the tread of the feeling, fading self who writes. Symbolization is founded upon a fundamental duplicity with the real, as Cixous (1972) reminds us: “One must remember that [Joyce] himself always said that he had invented nothing, and that he wished readers to take the trouble of tracing him to his hiding places in the work” (275). Whatever else Joyce gives us an account of, he makes language move according to a relationship between the image of the self, on one hand, and the imaging self, on the other. The psychology of this relationship is the question of how symbol formation and integration in infancy constitute not only a developmental achievement but also an emotional situation that renders the adult’s relationship to language a creative site for the cultivation and enrichment of self-other relations. In the end, the yesterselves we tread upon are recognizable only insofar as we do indeed turn upon them. We write the self so

that we might claim for subjectivity its self-possession, however paradoxical this may sound. “Why...sign anything,” asks Joyce, “as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paperspace is a perfect signature of its own?” (*Finnegans Wake*, 115).

#### **4.5 Epilogue: In search of play with forms of union**

Marion Milner (1987) offers an important question concerning the work of representing human efforts: “how is this capacity called psychic creativeness itself to be conceived, in what terms is it to be talked about?” (216). Psychic creativeness, Milner concludes, is the capacity for making a symbol. But why make a symbol? And, as I asked above, why make a symbol of the self? Is symbolizing the self necessary to what is called human development? I have argued that the developmental desire to symbolize the self is born from a certain obligation to the other. There is a relation to the other, and there is a self discoverable at both ends of this relation. The self also *is* this separation, discoverable because created, and created because found. To answer Lacan’s question of what Joyce gives account of, both in the written work and in the writing of the work, perhaps it is an account of a desire for and obligation to the exile-situations that image the self in separation from the other. The psychology of this account is the question of subject formation as tied to the formation of the symbol: separation symbolized as a form of union. Joyce and his artist emissaries configure the developmental scenes of symbolization and integration as separations and returns underscored by anxiety and libido, side by side, and held in time by a maternal other and the identificatory frontiers of the transitional object. My claim is that there is a developmental correlation between the word creativity as used to describe symbol formation in infancy, on one hand, and to

describe the activities of the adult in pursuit of play and creative living in writing, art and aesthetic experience, on the other. The concept of the transitional object opens a laboratory for thought on the adult's psychical reality, which includes fantasies and fictions of self and other. The creativity of the artist—the staggering linguistic and symbolic creativity of James Joyce—is here a referent for the human's condition of creativity in general as a special “coloring of the whole attitude to external reality” (Winnicott, 2005, 87).

We refer by the concept of art to a developmental aspect of the imagination, and to a particular form of subjectivation. Works of art image the self so as to enact a distanciation between subject and object, symbolizing the scenes of the self's first separatings as forms of union. In other words, art resonates with the tide and wind of infantile transitional phenomena. “Art is not escape from life,” says Stephen in *Stephen Hero*, “Art, on the contrary, is the very central expression of life... The artist affirms out of the fullness of his own life”(80). What we see in the artist is not the self in retreat, in exile, but the imaginative procedures that promise a relationship between separation and union, between the twin needs for separation and for no-separation. “The first step in the direction of beauty,” Stephen claims, this time in *Portrait*, “is to understand the frame and scope of the imagination, to comprehend the act itself of aesthetic apprehension” (208). In a fundamental reversal, the work of art *comprehends* the act of aesthetic apprehension. Joyce writes aesthetic theory in the mouths of artists created more and less in his image, giving account of something that itself can only be accounted for with sentimentality: understanding the imagination of the other. Stephen's beliefs are not Joyce's beliefs about art, they are moods put in motion—symbolic galaxies in motion—

by the frame and scope of an imaginative capacity produced *by* beliefs. “Hence surely it can be said,” remarks Milner (1987), “that a great work of art provides us with a new concept with which to give form to, to organize, find orientation in, the life of feeling” (227).

The creativity of the exemplary artist is here a scope for the imaginative tasks that tie the human to a separation at the foundation of subjectivity in infancy. Aesthetic apprehension is always already an apprehension of separation, and always already a gesture on the way to the acceptance and formation of symbols. Symbolization solicits identificatory content from the linguistic potentiality of the transitional object, which makes of aesthetic apprehension an image of the self. The artist’s defence against the ontic spacing of self and other is already a creative act, and creativity, on its side, is already inherently defensive insofar as it pertains to the enlargement of the self’s capacity to symbolize her relations of difference and separation as forms of union. “So, a writing is a fashioning that gives support to pondering,” as Lacan (2016) puts it, and such are the means by which the exemplary artist figures a way of thinking about human development as a problem of meaning (124). Reading and writing literature are also techniques for learning about development. Joyce’s exemplary style is a register for the form by which such a learning takes place. After all, “what would we know...of all that we call the self,” asks Ricoeur (2008), “if these had not been brought to language and articulated by literature?” (84).

James Joyce figures a literary style of thinking in writing as a “process of ‘observation in progress,’” to borrow again from Cixous (1972, 480). The infant’s submergence into semiology indexes the human’s acquisition of an observational

capacity—the capacity to look back upon the self while at the same time composing its image—giving development its aesthetic aspect. “Novelists come to their craft as the infant comes into language,” writes Tarc (2015), “language provides the means by which the child and the artist can both fictionally invent and destroy her forms of life, her others, her ideas, and her world” (52, 54). Joyce’s exquisite conduction of textual rhythms, out goings and returns, unfolds in the relationship to language of a subject in formation. When Cixous claims the “perfect Artist is he who has gone...to the very ends of suffering and of himself,” she also implies that the perfect Artist is she who feelingly returns to the place where suffering began, to the image of her first separatings, and to the matter of a hole we all have (568). The perfect artist comes to her craft like the infant comes into language, in search of play with forms of union along developmental lines: “a way a lone a last a loved a long the...” (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 628).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Sacred and Undecidable Capacities of Jacques Derrida

#### 5.1 A Thing Which Thinks Along the Way of Doubt

My portrait of Jacques Derrida as figure of the philosopher in development explores a relationship between doubt and the *undecidable*—a privileged concept in Derrida’s thought. In reading the development of the philosopher’s thought on the question of undecidability, on the impossibility of the decision, and in reading his doubts about the very possibility of this development, we are caught in a familiar bind that joins the subject of development to the question of its study: how to represent the experience of learning *from* doubt as a means of learning *about* it? What does a portrait of the philosopher’s doubt teach us about what doubt can come to mean for the subject and study of development? Derrida’s doubt written as undecidability causes subjectivity to tremble under its own elusive interruptions; he commits in writing only to that which cannot be pinned down, that which does not fall on one or the other side of those infamous philosophical pairs: being/nothingness, presence/absence, self/other.

Helene Cixous (2005) returns in this chapter as guide, friend, and contemporary of Derrida, she asks, “but how to paint or sketch such a genius at substitution? At least in a single portrait?” (viii). How does one sketch such a genius at substitution? My sketch comes in the form of development and the child’s use of a transitional object, creating what is found on the way to learning to tolerate doubt and undecidability as essential to subjectivity. I repeat Winnicott’s (2005) request that the paradox of the simultaneous creation and discovery of an object “be accepted and tolerated and respected, and for it not to be resolved” (xv). In a way, the philosopher too has always asked of her readers

precisely what the infant already asks of her guardians: that paradoxical ideas and ideas about paradoxes be accepted and tolerated and respected, and that they not be resolved.

Winnicott (1992a) writes of the capacity for doubts about the self that they “could almost be called the child’s most sacred attribute” (204). He’s speaking specifically about the child’s use of doubt in an educational setting as a waiting mechanism between what is asked of her and what she feels she can ask of herself, as between the authority of found objects and the creativity inherent in learning something new. The attribute is sacred, Winnicott suggests, because doubt is uniquely related to spontaneity, and without it, there is risk of compliance and loss of creativity. “Ordinary healthy doubt,” Winnicott (1990a) says elsewhere, is a “state of self-realization that follows instinctual experience,” opening into a “period of time and contemplation” that makes “possible the sorting out of good and bad and the temporary pattern of management of inner objects and forces and phenomena” (85). When there can be doubt, after the integration of the self, it is as a form of contemplation of the relation of inner objects and forces to what the child discovers and imagines as outside the self. Winnicott claims doubt as “essential to healthy development,” a certain seriousness and period of contemplation that can feel to the child like the opposite of work in the sense that it makes use of the freedom to think an object both ways, as subjectively conceived and objectively perceived (86).

For Milner (1987), the child’s doubts are about what is meant by inside and outside, and about what can be said to fund and organize the limiting boundary between them (the self? the other?). Milner calls the child’s preoccupation with and suspicion of the gap between what she imagines and what she encounters “the way of doubt” since, as she puts it, “a child is not born knowing what is going on in his own mind and what he

sees in the external world are separate and different kinds of reality” (13). The child, Milner continues, “slowly and laboriously...discovers by experience that thought is different from things” (13). Doubt in development has to do not only with coming to terms with a difference between thought and things, accepting the possibility of separate and different kinds of reality, but also with the capacity to tolerate displacement and inconsistency *within* this difference. “In order to know the nature of his own experience, or that of others,” Milner concludes, the child “has to learn to doubt [the] original belief that his own ideas are omnipotent and all there is” (13).

In other words, the difference between thought and things can eventually be accepted *because* it can itself be called into question. In early childhood doubt is a “holiday,” as Winnicott puts it, from the essentialist demands of parents and schoolteachers. And yet, there is something about this holiday that ties what is learned in childhood to what can be learned in adulthood about the nature of experience, of different kinds of reality, and of others. Perhaps doubts about the self are fundamental to how the human makes development meaningful and then makes from meaning further development. As Sartre (1981) claims: “What I am is what I was, because my present freedom always casts a doubt on the nature that I have acquired” (170).

At the close of his famous *Meditations* Descartes (1998) comes to accept that while ideas are caused by objects “it does not necessarily follow that they should be similar to them” (96). “But what then am I?” he concludes with a classical philosophical question, one that the child too must learn to meet, handle, and tolerate (85). “I am a thing which thinks,” Descartes answers his question, “that is to say, which doubts” (91). Familiar as we may be with Descartes’ certainty that thinking means existing, less well



trafficked is this claim that to think *means* to doubt. Hannah Arendt (2006) calls Descartes' "radical doubt" a "consolation": "I doubt, therefore I am" (275). Arendt argues, however, through the lens of modern science that the philosopher's doubt does not confirm the existence of a doubting self, but rather a doubtful one. It is the "I" in the declaration "I doubt" which is most doubtful of all. As Derrida (1981) puts it: "Whoever believes himself capable of saying I, I think, I am, I see, I feel, I say (you, for example, here and now)—is constantly and in spite of himself being decided by a throw of dice whose law will subsequently be developed inexorably by chance" (297-298).

Let us return to Derrida, then, here a figure in development as a means of thinking the way of doubt, the thinkable relationship between doubt and subjectivity. The discussion of this chapter is structured by three questions that typify the fundamental modality of philosophical reflection and that represent three indelible and yet ungraspable tears in the fabric of human understanding: 1) What is? 2) What came before? 3) What will this have meant? Derrida's own style of holding and handling these questions is our exemplary approach to the study of development as a problem of meaning—doubtful meaning and meaningful doubt.

As a figure in the history of thought whose doubts about the self help define the development of a philosophical venture called deconstruction, Derrida (1978) warns us against trusting his own claims to selfhood: "The name of a philosophical subject, when he says *I*, is always, in a certain way, a pseudonym" (110). The philosopher's doubt makes the thinking subject a fiction for thought, for unfolding in thought a relationship to what the philosopher tends to call truth. "Truth is (the truth of) fiction," Derrida (1981) reminds us, and first and foremost as concerns the subject when she says "I" (36).

To this end, the challenge is precisely to stay as close to Derrida's words as possible without essentializing his command over them. What Derrida gives us to think is not the constitutive ingredients of the philosopher's wager over a certain privileging of truth and untruth, self and other, inside and outside. In his own words Derrida (2001) is "weary, weary, weary of the truth and of the truth as untruth of a being-there...weary of this opposition that is not an opposition, of revelation as veiling, vice versa" (39). This chapter endeavors to think, then, with what Derrida puts on display in writing a way of doubt as a mode of thought that proceeds as though from a place beyond opposition. Derrida (2005) exemplifies the developmental wish for "a quite different thinking of the relation between the possible and the impossible," the wish to think this relation differently, and "to think thinking differently" (168). Below, I sketch a portrait of Derrida as a developmental subject given over to doubt, who harkens thereby back to the infantile conditions that forge the crucible for doubt from which the child's sacred attribute of doubting the self can grow. Our attentions will be divided between these positions. It is at bottom a question of what we believe, about doubt, about Derrida, and about development. Derrida is, after all, as Cixous (2005) writes in her *Portrait*, "the one who makes the heart of belief tremble, the philosophical divider, the one who knows that one cannot say I believe without doubting, without crossing out I and believe and doubt" (123).

## **5.2 What is?: Indwelling and undecidability**

*But what is the idea? one would proceed to ask. What is the ideality of the idea? When it is no longer the ontos in the form of the thing itself, it is, to*

*Speak in a post-Cartesian manner, the copy inside me, the representation of the thing through thought, the ideality—for the subject—of what is (194).*

—Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, 1981

Preoccupied by the overexcitement of instinct, the infant has the task of sorting out thoughts from things and redistributing affect across the symbolic planes of emergent meaning, a task that is, as Winnicott (1990a) argues, “never complete,” since “whatever is complete is disturbed by the next instinctual experience” (80). With the help of the transitional object and a facilitating environment, a self is established and integrated across the interrupting excitements of instincts and part function. When there is self enough in these redistributive tasks to begin to symbolize their place within the larger concern over the continuity of experience, instinctual experiences can proceed to the inauguration of a sense of doubt over what the self is. Doubt comes as an interruption to what Winnicott describes as the “simple identity of body and psyche” (94). The interruption introduces a complication into simple identity; the child’s point of view gains not only the added dimension of doubt, but with it a reflective movement that recasts the indeterminacy of thoughts and things as between possessions and relations. As Derrida (1978) writes: “Ever since I have had a relation to my body, therefore, ever since my birth, I no longer am my body. Ever since I have had a body I am not this body, hence I do not possess it. This deprivation institutes and informs my relation to my life” (180).

In a way, then, doubt reminds the child that the feeling of being a psyche lodged in the body is, as Winnicott puts it, an achievement, and, simultaneously, as Derrida puts it, a deprivation. The development of the child’s relation to life is informed by the deprivation of the body we have, but *are* not, and so also do not have. This development

both establishes the feeling of psyche-soma indwelling and also calls it into question. In this way, exaggerated doubt, as Winnicott (1990a) warns, risks a fall into a state of ill-health associated with loss of the sense of being contained in one's body. On the other side of exaggeration, however, is a rather ordinary questioning stance with regards to what the self is, and the self's relation to the body since birth.

Insofar as the artist's play might be said to be with symbolic meaning, the philosopher's play is precisely in the risk of meaning nothing at all. "To risk meaning nothing is to start to play," writes Derrida (1982b), "which prevents any words, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern" (14). There is play at the threshold of meaning, not just in its use, claims the philosopher, suspicious of governing even with this enunciation. "If play is neither inside nor outside, where is it?" asks Winnicott (2005) in *Playing and Reality* (129). The question is perhaps at bottom rhetorical, play is neither inside nor outside, and yet wherever there is play, both an inside and an outside to the self are implicated. Winnicott does not in the end posit where play is, he posits instead a third space in which the decision is meaningless. As the self develops she is all the time making distinctions between ideas about the body and the body itself, between thoughts and things, but in order to animate the play of these distinctions she also makes use of doubts over how they reflect a self in the first place— from inside? Outside?

For Derrida, to ask the question, "what is?" is first of all to begin by doubting one's distinctions, one's capacity for making and taking sides. "There are not two sides," Derrida (2006a) writes of life and death, "therefore there is no side, and that is the undecidable" (75). The philosopher is undecided as to what is, and the philosophical

aspect of the human's early reflective procedures is precisely this capacity not only to play with indecision, but more basically, to play in *undeciding*. When Derrida (1982a) asks, "Does philosophy answer a need? How is it to be understood? Philosophy? The need?" he is asking about philosophy's own outside, its margins, and most importantly, about what is undecidable *about* philosophy, not just within it, but also about how it comes to be, how it *is* (x). These are questions at once about the development of philosophy as well as about a philosophy of development. For instance, how is the need that philosophy answers related to the human's need to doubt the self?

Derrida *undecidebalizes*, to use Cixous' (2007) verb. He subjects philosophy, what philosophy thinks, to its own undecidable limits. In a nascent manner closer to emotional logic, the child's capacity for doubt also concerns the undecidable, but at the margins of the self. "If there are margins," asks Derrida (1982a), "is there still *a* philosophy, *the* philosophy?" (xvi). The philosopher's question echoes the child's own (developmental) line of inquiry: If there are margins to the self, of the psyche and the soma, for instance, is there still *a* self, *the* self? The stakes of philosophical thought, according to what Cixous (1991) attributes to what Derrida "keeps on saying," is "the incorporation of the limit" (92). The child on the way of doubt engages in the question of what the self is, and reckons with instinctual claims of authority over the problem of its own margins. Once infantile omnipotence is gradually disillusioned by failures of the facilitating environment in the meeting of needs, doubts about the self begin to organize around what the desire for the maternal other is in fact a desire for—the otherness outside the doubtful self? Is this otherness a thought or a thing? Derrida's writing on and in the margins of philosophy repeats and exemplifies the child's trials in the court of *what is*.

He questions the philosophical subject, its authority, most pertinently, over itself. “With what is one to *authorize oneself*,” Derrida writes, “in the last analysis, if not once more with philosophy” (xxii). His claim is that in its effort to think its limits and its other, philosophy always falls back upon an authority it grants itself. And such is the dilemma as well for a self in development, who in the effort to think its own otherness, its body, for instance, must always take for granted the authority of an ego that already *is*, a self-presence, the presence and relation of the self to itself.

In Winnicott’s theory of development, the authority of the self is introduced in symbol formation, in the giving of meaning to sense, images to emergent meanings, and meaningful presence to absence. I have argued that it is the artist in us who images the self in and through the symbolization of sense in meaning. In which case, it is the philosopher in us who returns to this image with doubts about the self. Derrida (1982a) frames this return as a philosophical need: “It is simply to ask questions about *another relationship* between what are called, problematically, *sense* and *meaning*” (172). My claim is that the child’s attribute of doubts about the self, which emerge on the other side of the infant’s use of a transitional object, is the modality of the mind that founds the development of each person’s capacity for what is called philosophical thought, for the affirmation: “me too, I’m a philosopher.”

The child’s capacity for doubt is the condition of possibility for the human’s questions about another relationship between sense and meaning. Accompanying this doubt, according to Milner (1987) is “confusion between the inner and outer realities” (14). The child’s ability to “realize the inner reality as process,” Milner contends, “require[s] the ability to tolerate doubt and the willingness to wait in uncertainty” (14).

The relationship between sense and meaning is a waiting relationship, a relationship in childhood that waits between, as Milner puts it, a psychic reality that knows itself and one that knows *about* itself. For Descartes while there can be doubt about what is known about the self, there cannot be doubt about the existence of the self that is there to be known. But what Derrida helps undecidabilize in Descartes' claim is also what Milner and Winnicott see at the heart of the child's development: The capacity to tolerate the thought that the self too comes to be known *from* doubt and not just through it. After all, when we doubt everything we know *about* the self, what remains? Its margins?

In Milner's (1987) work on doubt she is after what she calls "the positive aspects of not-knowing," for which she recalls the poet Keat's term "negative capability" (260). It may be that what distinguishes the artistic modality from the philosophical in the child's use of the transitional object is precisely this negative capability of *waiting in uncertainty*. If, as Milner holds, it is the artist in each of us that helps us to see the familiar in the unfamiliar, perhaps it is the philosopher in each of us that helps us to find the reverse, to discover the unfamiliar in the familiar. For, as our exemplary philosopher observes, "representation mingles with what it represents," and "in this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable" (Derrida, 1997a, 36). As soon as there can be representation—a sign, symbol, or image—for the self, there is a self taken for granted for whom such a representation signifies. For the philosopher, then, as Derrida's oeuvre attests, a trace "must be thought before the entity" (47). We might characterize this trace along developmental lines as that which is doubted when the child has doubts about the self, that is, as the very borderline distinguishing psyche from soma, a difference that precedes the question of what belongs to the self, or more basically, the

question of what *is*. If there is a way of doubt common both to child development and philosophical thought it is a reflective process that has to do with thinking the trace that gives the margins of the self, that both “exceeds the question What is? And contingently makes it possible” (Derrida, 75).

And so what is this imaginative turn called philosophy? What else is (it called)? And who is (called by it)? Derrida’s style of thought, his method of philosophizing, has been given the name “deconstruction,” a name he resists but does not always resist the use of, a name that resounds in his speech and writing, in his thought perhaps, any time his own name is used. In Derrida’s (1998) words: “What is called ‘deconstruction’ undeniably obeys an analytic exigency, at once critical and analytic. It is always a matter of undoing, desedimenting, decomposing, deconstituting sediments, artefacta, presuppositions, institutions” (27). And yet, later in the same text, he will undo some of the binds of this statement, desedimenting his own claims, calling into question the “truth without truth” of deconstruction: Deconstruction, “if there is any,” he doubts, “is not a critique, still less a theoretical or speculative operation methodically carried out by someone; rather, if there is any deconstruction, it takes place...as experience of the impossible” (55). Derrida’s method is not methodical, and we should doubt, he tells us, that he himself has ever carried it out. Deconstruction takes place as experience of the impossible. Recalling the infant’s impossible experience of creating what is found, we are, in a sense, back where we started. Can we say, then, that transitional phenomena are the taking place of the analytic exigency later called deconstruction? Could we say that the transitional object is deconstructive or that deconstruction itself gives a theory of transitional phenomena? Is deconstruction, in the last analysis, a sophisticated elaboration



of the philosophical incentive of the child who cultivates in her use of an object a capacity for doubts about the self? “The undecidable is not a clean break,” writes Cixous (2005), it “is a quick leap between two opposing possibilities but that touch” (11). Let us accept this undecidable possibility, then, that Derrida’s deconstruction touches upon Winnicott’s transitional object—we can believe in it while crossing out the word believe.

### **5.3 What Came Before?: Aloneness and dependence**

*In each me some notme falls and gets back up otherwise* (152).

—Helene Cixous, *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, 2007.

Perhaps I have gone too quickly, arriving too soon at the philosopher’s limits while having skipped the step of the bits and pieces from which these limits are composed in the first place. By asking the philosopher’s second question, “What came before?” we can go back and imagine what came before these limits, the conditions that ground the very emergence of doubt. Here I proceed a second time into the question of the role of a capacity for doubt in human development, and in the development of the philosopher that infantile experience makes of each of us, though undecidably. “What came before?” is a question I put to our exemplary philosopher: What came before Derrida, before there was a method of philosophizing called “deconstruction,” before there were “deconstructive” texts that fell under his name, and indeed, even before the conferral, deliverance, and remembrance of his name at all? It is a question I put as well to the infantile developmental scene: What came before there was self enough to doubt?

Winnicott (2005) calls the human’s primary state of being the “pre-primitive stage,” adding that the statement of this condition involves a paradox: an essential

aloneness and a maximum dependence: “At first, the child is alone only in the presence of someone” (130). “Throughout the life of an individual,” Winnicott (1990a) expands in another text, “there continues a fundamental unalterable and inherent aloneness, along with which goes unawareness of the conditions that are essential to the state of aloneness” (132). Aloneness and dependence come before, aloneness without awareness because of a maximum of dependence upon someone else. What comes before, then, is not yet the other, but a difference between being and awareness, which has as its destiny the thought of the difference between self and other.

We can put differently the question of what came before as a question concerning what aloneness has to do with dependence. In other words, what conditions are essential to the aloneness of the philosopher with her doubts? By conditions, in this way, I refer to an environment that harbors both aloneness without awareness and awareness of dependence. I gesture here as well to the way in which an infant is anticipated by a socio-cultural environment already incorporated by the maternal other in her mind and attitude, a tradition that is an outside already on the inside of the new baby’s developmental atmosphere. There is an insecure temporality to these speculations. Nonetheless, profoundly felt identifications in the development of the self have this necessary feature of referencing a before-you-were-born inherent in the environment into which one appears.

Our philosopher helps elucidate this dynamic between aloneness and dependence as an environmental factor in development. For Derrida (2011), the terms and conditions for his aloneness are housed in what he calls, in quotation marks, his “Jewishness,” a relation he describes as a “tormented ‘we,’” which can be found, “at the heart of what is

most worried in my thought,” (39). Born into a Jewish family in French governed Algeria, there is a story of exclusion that traces the contours of Derrida’s life and philosophy, which gave the philosopher the terms of his most personal forms of doubt. “*Was I Jewish, he will have wondered all his life. Shall I have been Jewish?*” Cixous (2005) puts the question on Derrida’s tongue (1). Before doubt, before the philosopher is born into doubt and begins to doubt who he will have been, an environment of others affirms, “we”. The tormented “we” is affirmed and can be doubted, an attribute that precedes the self it is attributed to. This tormented “we” conditions the environment of the self in development with the question of a difference between aloneness and dependence. How Derrida belongs to this “we” gives the terms for how his aloneness signifies.

“I am at war with myself,” says Derrida (2011), “beyond what you can guess, and I say contradictory things that are, we might say, in real tension; they are what construct me, make me live, and will make me die” (46). The philosopher wars with himself over the question, “Shall I have been Jewish?” a tension that signifies an affirmation around which the philosopher’s doubt comes to be oriented in his development. In a word, doubt is the trembling “we” smuggled into the embodied self, an indwelling of psyche-soma made from that which came before. The tension is that aloneness is only discoverable through doubts about the tormented affirmation of a “we.” Developmentally, if we follow the emotional logic Winnicott grants the primary scenes of life, maximum independence also means togetherness, or, perhaps further, maximum intersubjectivity. The exchange is one of knowledge of aloneness for knowledge of dependence, an exchange which passes

for its expression, fundamentally, unalterably, and inherently, through the capacity for doubt, an eternal war of self with self, which others the self in the arms of the other.

The *before* of the philosopher includes a response to the affirmation of the “we”, a response that opens into the capacity for doubt, “a responsible response,” writes Derrida (1997b), “surely a *yes*, but a *yes to* preceded by the *yes of* the other” (23). Elsewhere, Derrida (2011) suggests that the philosophical method of deconstruction, “is always on the side of the *yes*” (50). Perhaps since Nietzsche’s own emphatic pronouncements on the philosophy of affirmation, the figure of the philosopher has oriented her capacity for doubt around the possibility of a *yes* as a first relationality. At the risk of obscuring Winnicott’s claims, I see the side of the *yes* as the side of a fundamental dependence, the solitude of the self founded in the affirmation of her dependence upon the other, a *yes* that comes before doubt upon which the very possibility for doubt rests. “In spite of...so many...problems I have with my ‘Jewishness,’” Derrida reflects, “I will never deny it. I will always say, in certain situations, ‘we Jews.’” (39). Before there can be doubt, there is first an undeniable affirmation, a *yes* in the tenor of a tormented “we.”

“The thinking of this ‘yes’ *before* philosophy, *before* the question even, *before* research and critique,” Derrida (2002) imagines philosophy’s place in the development of thought, “does not mean a renunciation of philosophy, of what might follow it or follow from it” (13). “The thinking *can*, one can even think that it *must*,” he concludes, “lead precisely to philosophy” (13). Philosophy follows from the thought of this *yes* which precedes all else, a thought which leads precisely, one must think, to philosophy. My conjecture, taking Derrida’s lead, is that aloneness and dependence are the first thoughts of philosophy, coming after a *yes*, following the *yes* of the “we” as a capacity for doubt:

doubt about the self as the feeling form of awareness of dependence upon the other, maximum at first.

Derrida thinks playfully on the consequence of his responsible response to the *yes* of the other. “I know Helene Cixous,” Derrida (2001) claims, naming an other, “I have known her, note the improbable tense of that verb, for more than thirty-three years, but since forever without knowing” (34). But since forever without knowing, the philosopher’s conviction is always put in an improbable tense. Derrida is alone in his knowledge of Helene Cixous, and so he doubts his dependence on this knowledge. Since forever without knowing, his doubt opens into thought of the impossible. “Yet, she is since forever for him,” Cixous (2007) responds, “the cause come from without of an astounding explosion” (51). The astounding explosion, Derrida’s doubt as (to) the development of his thought, comes from without, from the other, since forever unknown. Cixous confirms: “No one can meet another except beyond knowing” (34).

Before philosophy, before there is a philosopher on the way of doubt, a *yes* affirms the beyond knowing that can become contact with the other, a capacity for doubt and aloneness at the heart of inter-dependence. What kind of knowledge, then, is the self’s knowledge of her otherness *for the other*? Can this contact beyond knowing, founded in the holding and handling of the infant by the maternal other, be thought along with Winnicott’s pre-primitive stage of essential aloneness? To return to Winnicott’s schema, the difference between the infant’s gradual acceptance of the indwelling of the psyche-soma and the thought of the *yes* of a tormented “we” is how I conceive of the reflective modality in infancy that makes from the child’s doubts about the self a developmental achievement, a capacity to tolerate the beyond knowing of the fact that

aloneness is made possible by the presence of someone else. The philosopher in us uses the way of doubt as a way to and from contact with the others we know, the others we have known, noting all the while the improbable tense of the verb.

Derrida's philosophical texts are in a sense so many commentaries on the thought of a *yes* before philosophy, which is other than a simple origin. "There is no longer a simple origin," he writes, "what can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation... is that one plus one makes at least three" (Derrida, 1997a, 36). If the meaning of development implies something about the conditions under which one finds oneself *in* development, of discovering and creating a relation of self and other, then development is here also a question of how affirmation before philosophy brings the self into a particular thinking relation to itself, in representation, through doubt founded upon dependence, making at least three from one plus one.

To recall, for Winnicott psychological health in infancy and throughout life concerns, among other things, a capacity for creative toleration of the fact of an unalterable and inherent aloneness that goes along with a fundamental unawareness of the conditions that make it possible. The philosopher's concern, however, is with the meaning of this tolerance as a question about the very meaning of being, of what is and that which can be doubted. "We who are close to ourselves," writes Derrida (1982a), "*we* interrogate *ourselves* about the meaning of Being" (126). The figure of the philosopher gives over to the thought of development an interrogation of the *yes* that comes before, a way of doubt following from the affirmation of a tormented "we." The way of doubt leads to the question of what came before as a means of posing the self in, or positing the

self from, a questioning stance, of finding the self, alone, but in the place of the other, making at least three, in dependence.

Writing again about Cixous, it seems to Derrida (2006b) that it is the other who always already finds what the self is looking for, that Cixous has already found before him what he is looking for: “that which I believe myself to be the first to have found, this or that, all by myself, there where I find myself, and this is, as is well known, in a place and in the middle of a history utterly different from hers, where I find myself finding that she, herself, has already found, there where she finds herself” (65). The philosopher is all by himself, alone, when he believes he has found something where he finds himself, but what he has found is the other’s finding, he finds what the other has found in finding herself, or finally, he finds he is dependent upon the finding of the other, all by himself he depends upon the other finding herself. Derrida calls this relation “an affirming act of grace, an act of confirmation and of consent, of assent” (65). What comes before is an affirmation that gives an improbable tense to the self’s capacity to be all by herself, to be alone. What came before is an encounter beyond knowing. Winnicott places this conflict at the pre-primitive stage of human development as a paradox between essential aloneness and maximum dependence. The encounter with the other is beyond knowing and between the aloneness and dependence that comes before, before the self, before philosophy, and so also before the philosophical self. I close this section with a parenthetical comment from Derrida (2006a) on his first encounter with Cixous, sometime before he has come to know her:

(One will never know—what is called knowing—if one was able to meet somebody—what is called meeting. Against common sense, I believe that the

destiny of fate is made of these improbable, even impossible encounters, encounters impossible to know, see or foresee, calculate, irreducible to science and consciousness, which is another way of speaking about a certain unbinding, the extraordinary dissociation between the thought of fate or even of destiny and, on the other hand, the very idea of destination. There should not be any relation between fate and destiny on the one hand, and destination on the other hand) (63-64).

#### **5.4 What Will This Have Meant?: Play and belief (preceded by the subjunctive)**

An important distinction exists for the philosopher between the question, “what will this mean?” posed in the simple future tense, and the same question put in future perfect, “what will this have meant?” The philosopher’s projection of meaning is not simply into an as yet unimagined future, but more specifically into a subject position in an imagined future from which the self looks back. Cixous (2007) describes this as Derrida’s “way of turning round, blind, toward the unanticipatable. His way of imagining a retrospective future” (150). The philosopher’s future perfect inflection extends the child’s sacred capacity for doubts about the self as a developmental resource, turning round toward the unanticipatable in the meaning of that which can be doubted. The philosopher’s doubts, inasmuch as they concern what *is* and that which came before, concern as well a meaning yet to come, a retrospective future, a reflective stance from which possibilities in meaning have already, improbably, come to pass. The meaning of the philosopher’s doubt is always yet to come, and we are each of us philosophical insofar as our development is founded upon such a regard for the yet to come of what



doubt can mean for who we are becoming, “we” who came before, tormented, as so many unprovable and impossible encounters between selves and others.

More specifically, the philosopher’s relation to the yet-to-come of her doubts about the self is mediated by language and writing, by the act of writing down philosophical thought, of writing in and through the very thought of philosophy, of what it shall have meant. For Derrida by writing we refer as well, inescapably, to play, to a play of differences, of signs and signifiers, presences and absences, not as oppositional concepts in exchange, but as signifying interactions whose meaning is deferred, always still to come. The philosopher’s doubt plays *out* in writing, but it also plays. Winnicott’s own conception of play in the child’s early development helps elucidate this relation. Winnicott (2005) likens play in childhood to dressing oneself in adulthood and to a question of “being honest about oneself” (146). Like writing, or as Winnicott points out, speech as well, play can also “be said to be given us to hide our thoughts, if it is the deeper thoughts that we mean,” and in this way, he goes on, “play, like dreams, serves the function of self-revelation” (146). As a relation of honesty about oneself in hiding and self-revelation, play is also a particular use the child might make of doubts about the self that involves transitions in the relationship between inner and external reality, between the subjective conception and objective perception of objects and others. To write philosophically can be to make use after childhood of a particular style of play made possible in and within the imaginative potentialities of integrative achievements. “A playful vein, played out in words,” writes Cixous (2007) of Derrida, “circulated through all his philosophy” (73).

In his seminal theoretical discussion of play and transitional objects in *Playing and Reality* (2005) Winnicott describes one of the achievements made possible in play as the shift for the child from relating to objects to being able to use them. Playful in this transition is the child's "placing of the object outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control," which means, Winnicott argues, that the child destroys the object in imaginative fantasy (120). Perhaps we can hold that doubts about the omnipotence of the self are an example of how the child destroys the object, which is both Me and not-Me. Winnicott argues that the child must feel she has destroyed the object in order to make use of it; this marks the beginning of the capacity to perceive and accept the object as an external phenomenon, "not as a projective entity," but "as an entity in its own right" (120). Play involves the subjective change from relating to usage, from the experiencing of everything as internal to the self to the feeling that the psyche is lodged within the soma, an internal reality within an external reality.

If we can say that the self too is at some point an object in these transitions for which the child gradually accepts and perceives an external reality outside of the subject's omnipotent control, then we can hold that the self is also destroyed in imaginative fantasy in order then to be used for emotional growth. In other words, perhaps the child plays with doubts about the self in order to make use of the self as an external object, as embodied and so objectified by the other. The philosophical aspect of play in development destroys the self in the imaginative fantasies of self-doubt so as to make use of the object-quality of the self for conceiving of relationality.

"To relate to an object—as such," remarks Derrida (1996) in an interview entitled "As If I Were Dead," "is to pretend that you are dead" (217). Derrida is answering a

question about how one might “apply Derrida.” He considers the difference in his own relation to and use of the self as subject and object in philosophical writing. “On the one hand,” he says, “there is no applied deconstruction. You have to perform it in your language and situation” (217). In other words, the subject is utterly subjective. “On the other hand,” Derrida undecidabilizes, “there is nothing but application. You can only apply deconstruction” (217). And so too is the subject always already an object for the other. Derrida plays here with two undecidable sides on the question of whether or not he can be applied, let alone by himself, which he doubts.

Winnicott (2005) observes a third option: “Should the philosopher come out of his chair and sit on the floor with his patient, however, he will find that there is an intermediate position. In other words, he will find that after ‘subject relates to object’ comes ‘subject destroys object’...and then may come ‘object survives destruction by subject.’ But there may or may not be survival” (120). The survival of the object, which can be doubted, is the third space in the child’s transition from relation to use. The object is both destroyed and also survives its destruction, both are accepted, both are true as simultaneous *facts* available for use in emotional growth. The philosopher is she who returns in thought to this doubtful third way, to this philosophical aporia that constitutes the developmental attribute of self-doubt. “I don’t know what will happen to the name Derrida after this,” says Derrida (1996), “I’ll try to survive” (218).

The philosopher plays (with) the self between relation and use in the composition of the philosophical text, where play, like dreams, serves the function of hiding and of self-revelation. What will this have meant? To the philosopher it will have meant the production of texts that keep doubt alive with and within the play of thought upon the

borderlines of the self—subject-object, psyche-soma. “The philosophical text...does not let go,” writes Cixous (1991), “The philosopher takes back what [s]he has lost and gathers it in a noun” (112). The philosophical text is precisely that text which has the survival of the object, as well as its destruction, both, firmly in hand. It does not let go, gathering together a noun: deconstruction. The injunction of the philosopher’s text “gives rise to undecidability,” writes Derrida (2004), and to “an overdetermination that cannot be mastered” (101). Overdetermination here means that the act of writing must tolerate a paradox of its own: The self is destroyed by the text and also survives its destruction, and the text, on its own undecidable side, survives and is destroyed by the self. How do we decide in textual applications who is responsible for what, who is used or related to, applied or applying, who or what survives, and furthermore, what it will have meant to survive, the text or the self, at least for a time?

“How is one to feel accountable for what one...is not yet?” Derrida (2004) wonders, “but what else is one to feel responsible for, if not for what does not belong to us?” (155). The problem of belonging and accountability is founded in the transition from relating to use. In creating what is there to be found the child enters into a lifelong economy wherein relating and use along a way of doubt can mean either and both hiding and self-revelation, and the self’s survival depends ultimately upon the capacity to tolerate the undecidability between self and other, aloneness and dependence. In this way, insofar as doubt raises a question of accountability, it raises as well a dilemma of belief. In other words, the sacred capacity for doubt has as its supplement an emotional situation of belief. The child learns to make from doubts about the self belief in her capacity to

tolerate unknowability in play. Likewise, the philosopher writes from doubt a form of belief in what doubt will have meant to and for others.

Derrida (2006a) notes his interest “in what happens when ‘believe’ is preceded by the subjunctive (*would that I might, that I might, would that we might, would that you might* believe), which seems to play between the possible and the impossible” (4). The philosopher’s doubt is a form of belief preceded by the subjunctive. In other words, what this will have meant, as it plays between the possible and the impossible, is a question that puts doubts about the self in the form of beliefs in the other, preceded by the subjunctive. The philosopher wants to believe, or so Derrida believes, writes Cixous (2005): “he believes he knows better than to believe, he who would like, who would really like to believe, but who believes he doesn’t believe...He doesn’t believe himself. Misfortune for him, fortunate for us” (39).

“I-met-her-some-thirty-five-years-ago-maybe,” Derrida (2006a) applies himself to the question of believing he knows the other, again Cixous, “and although I have probably never understood anything about it, although I have not understood her yet, we have probably never been apart. It is *as if* we had *almost* never been apart” (5). “Yes,” Derrida repeats his doubtful belief, “I believe, I-met-her-some-thirty-five-years-ago-maybe” (5). It is as if they had almost never been apart. “Almost never,” Cixous (2007) recalls Derrida’s sentence in *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, “neither never nor its opposite” (33). There is at once both so much doubt and so much belief in what Derrida writes about the other. “Here is a sentence that in its redoubled hypothetical prudence says something undecidable,” Cixous goes on, “the subject of the utterance says one thing that is another thing” (33). The subject of the utterance has doubts and what he says and in the

face of his doubt intends toward what it would mean to believe, what it will have meant to believe. Would that he might believe. “And you, who’re you?” Cixous asks the philosopher, “No doubt the one who puts in question doubt and the no doubt,” she answers in his place, in the place of his belief in what it will have meant to know her (33).

If we look carefully, saying one thing that is another thing, putting in question doubt and the no doubt, is the child’s utterance as well, as Winnicott styles it. Play between relating to and use of the transitional object is a philosophical utterance: The subject of the utterance says Me and not-Me simultaneously, not-Me returns Me otherwise. The child utters, “it is as if we have almost never been apart,” and she speaks equally of both her self and her other. Cixous (2007), too, doubts that it is she who Derrida names by H.C.: “I have always doubted that I was she...when you name her, I rise, I trust you, as for me I still have my doubts. You, on your side, you know her with a perhaps, since forever without knowing” (111). In doubt and through the perhaps of a belief yet to come, the philosophical self lives the question of what dependence and aloneness will have meant—a not-Me known forever without knowing.

### **5.5 Is There Such a Thing as a Philosopher?**

Doubts about the self in early childhood are a capacity of relating to and eventually of being able to use the self as an object of thought, an achievement that sets the individual on the way to being able to accept the indwelling of psyche-soma and of coming to terms with what it will have meant to believe in the other, a way to relative independence, which also means relative dependence and aloneness. The philosopher in

each of us reckons with doubts about the self in childhood where the self is felt to be a question about the unit status of mind and body, a question different from, though related to, the unit status of self and other. Winnicott (1989) observes, “one wants to be able to say that the psyche and the soma...do not start off as a unit,” that, “they form a unit *if all goes well in the development of that individual*; but this is an achievement” (566). I have argued, with Derrida as figure, that the achievement of unit status comes along a way of doubt framed by three philosophical questions: What is? What came before? What will this have meant?

Doubt in development as both an achievement and resource means that the human is never at ease with the story of her beginnings, of a self at the beginning and a beginning to the self. Derrida (1997a) calls childhood “the first manifestation of the deficiency which, in Nature, calls for substitution” (146). He asks, “How is a natural weakness possible? How can Nature ask for forces that it does not furnish? How is a child possible in general?” (146). These are the questions that underlie Winnicott’s caveat, “if all goes well in the development of the individual.” The self’s beginning is an achievement made possible by the supplement of a maternal other and a facilitating environment, the supplement meets the infant’s instinctual excitement so that a self can come together, and so that there can be time, when the time comes, to doubt the self. That a child is possible in general, but comes to *be* from doubts about her own possibility, is a question that brings the subject of human development to the limits of what Britzman (2015) calls the human condition of education. In this way, the figure of the philosopher offers a characterization of education as the question, precisely, of what supplements human development. As Derrida puts it: “Pedagogy illuminates...the paradoxes of the

supplement,” and then elsewhere: “The struggle for philosophy, in philosophy, around philosophy, in fact cuts through...the entire teaching body, teachers as well as students (1997a, 146; 2004, 167).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is regarding influence in education that both Winnicott (1992a) and Milner (1987) refer to the importance of the child’s capacity for doubt. Milner’s 1942 paper “The Child’s Capacity for Doubt” was written as a severe critique of authoritarianism in education during and following World War Two. Milner’s paper makes a case simultaneously for doubt as the basis of imagination as well against the omnipotent thoughts of educators. The way of doubt, as Milner sees it, is an education for educators as well as for the development of the child’s imagination. Winnicott also argues that if the teacher can tolerate being doubted, just as the maternal other tolerates doubt in the child’s play with the transitional object, then there can be room in education for the child’s capacity to doubt the self, which means as well room for the child’s capacity to develop in and from her own tolerance of undecidability, to play between the inside and outside of creativity and discovery in pedagogy, to make developmental resources from developmental achievements.

The figure of the philosopher represents the way of doubt as a way of learning philosophically, which is not to say a means of learning philosophy. Pedagogy, too, as Milner admonishes, is not learned and possessed as knowledge, but rather is doubtful, and so illuminates philosophical thought in development, not philosophy as such, or teaching as such. “One is never in possession of Philosophy,” writes Derrida (2004), “the teacher of pure reason no more than anyone else. [S]He is the teacher of philosophizing, not of philosophy” (61). The philosopher’s capacity to *undecidabilize* gives pedagogy a



developmental valence. “Philosophy eludes teaching,” claims Derrida, “while philosophizing requires it, requires endlessly and only teaching” (62). Coming to the crux of the matter, Derrida refers us back to Kant’s claim that in the last analysis there is no philosopher: “There is the idea of philosophy, there is philosophizing, there are subjects who can learn to philosophize, to learn it from others, and to teach it to others...but there is no philosopher, nor philosophy” (62).

The philosopher is only ever a figure, then, on the way of doubt, teaching philosophizing endlessly. But there is no philosopher as such. Which is also a way of saying there are only philosophers; everyone is a philosopher insofar as there are subjects who can learn philosophizing from others, learn to tolerate doubts about the self in the development of belief in others. Derrida (2011) says of his oeuvre, “each book is a pedagogy aimed at forming its reader” (31). I extend Derrida’s claim: Doubt itself is a pedagogy aimed at forming its reader. The maternal other learns to read the child’s doubt, not as raising developmental concerns about certainty, but as offering for thought uncertainty that can be accepted. The child, then, is no philosopher, but she is a teacher of philosophizing, a pedagogue whose pedagogy is her transitional play between relating and use, between hiding and revealing the self, and between accepting and inventing—discovering and creating—her aloneness and her dependency.

Derrida imagines “an act of writing as an act of love that binds and *reads—might* read as it unbinds the threads, while weaving an alliance in the analysis of unbinding itself” (2006a, 104). Would that writing might also read, he seems to say, that an alliance might be weaved in the analysis of unbinding itself—doubt about what can be written hangs upon belief in what can be read, belief in what it will have meant to read doubt

writing. The way of doubt, then, is a call for reading. With Derrida, “we sense the importance of a certain cordiality toward reading,” writes David Clark (2007), “with others and exposed to otherness” (297). “Derrida calls for a kind of loving patience and for a certain slow reading,” Clark continues, “a labor of deliberation at odds with the confessional impulses” (299). Doubt is not confessed so as to be tolerated, it is tolerated so as to be read with a certain cordiality, exposed to otherness, with loving patience for what it will have meant for the self to believe in its other, a relation yet to come, known forever without knowing. In Winnicott’s formulation, this call to reading is an attitude, no less cordial, toward development: that development be thought of as a going concern. The maternal other does not read into the transitional experience of the infant in the interest of this or that potentiality for the molding of outcomes, but for possibilities in the meaning attributable to experience as a relation.

As Mario Di Paolantonio (2014) argues: “Philosophy seems to be more like a pause, an unsettling question or interruption that vexes, rather than something that can be practically measured, captured or instantly applied” (13). The philosopher, if there is such a thing, is she who doubts the actuality of the self, and its application, she who has no instruction to give the other as to what the world is or ought to be, but she who nonetheless speaks of her doubt and the perhaps of a belief in what it will have meant. “It is a question of speaking to the ear, and the ear alone,” writes Derrida (2006a), “where it does not know yet how to read” (13). “To speak, therefore,” the philosophizer goes on, “where there still remains something to learn: how to read and live, for life—up to the end” (13).

## CHAPTER SIX

### “Not Less Than Everything”: The self in care

#### 6.1 “Almost All We Have”: The fact of dependence

In 1971, near the end of his life, Winnicott began writing his autobiography. The reality of his death was something he negotiated “gradually and in his own way,” as his wife Clare puts it in her preface to the edited collection of his work *Psycho-Analytic Explorations* (1989, 3). She describes how she urged her husband to write an autobiography from the feeling that “his style of writing would lend itself to such a task” (3). The text bore the provisional title *Not Less Than Everything*. In the inner flap of the notebook in which he had begun the work Winnicott quotes T.S. Eliot: “What we call the beginning is often the end/And to make an end is to make a beginning. /The end is where we start from” (3). Following the quote Winnicott writes a prayer: “Oh God! May I be alive when I die” (3).

Winnicott began at the end with a prayer that there be life, even after the end, in order to begin again. The autobiography’s title is also drawn from a line of T.S. Eliot’s, quoted as well in the inner flap: “Costing not less than everything” (Winnicott, 1989, 3). The cost brings to mind Melanie Klein’s (2002) claim that to speak about the self, that “most complicated relationship of all,” is to speak about *everything*: “everything we have lived through,” Klein argues, “makes part of our selves and goes to build up our personalities” (338). Not less than everything we have lived through makes part of our selves. How else can we account for the self except in reference to everything, to what we call the beginning as well as the end, and so to all of its parts? Winnicott set himself the task of telling his very singular story of everything, and to start from the end, to be alive

for his death. The title recalls as well the opening of his text *Human Nature* (1990a), another book he began at the end of his life. The book was under review and revision at the time of his death. The opening reads: “The task is the study of human nature. At the moment of starting to write this book I am all too aware of the vastness of such an enterprise. Human nature is almost all we have” (Winnicott, 1). At the end, Winnicott still wonders how it is that we begin. The challenge, from beginning to end, is a question of what lies between almost all that we have as our nature, on the one hand, and everything that makes up part of the self, on the other, which we don’t have in the sense that we do not possess what we *are*. In the present study, between almost all and everything is a story of development. If human nature is somehow less than everything we have, then there can be a theory of development with which to begin again, even at the end.

As my dissertation has analyzed at length, one of Winnicott’s fundamental claims about human development is that we must add to the almost all of our nature the fact of dependence. And while dependency can itself be said to be part and parcel of the human’s nature, what is added to the individual’s nature by the fact of dependence is an additional nature, that of the maternal other. We get from almost all to everything by the thought of how human nature refers always already to at least two natures, a baby in relation to a maternal other, and then also to an environment between them that provisions, as I have discussed, ideas and fantasy life, union and separation, illusion and disillusionment, and the paradox of having created what is found.

Winnicott and Klein both understood, however, that the living through of experience matters to the building up of personality, that there must *be* a self, from one

end to the other of experience for its significance to be felt and translated into emotional growth. Being, then, is a modality in excess of all that the self can be said to *have*—being cared for, for instance, in addition to having what is called a human nature. The theoretical framework I’ve returned to throughout this study, underpinning the figural portraiture in each chapter, extends Winnicott’s assumption that *being* is a living through of the experience of what the self *has*. Being in development is a living through of our nature. In Winnicott’s (1990b) view there can be a developmental maxim: “Be before Do. Be has to develop behind Do. Then eventually the child rides *even the instincts* without loss of sense of self. The origin, therefore, is the individual’s...tendency to be alive and to stay alive and to be related to objects that get in the way when the moments come for reaching out, even for the moon” (42). As I have argued in the company of exemplary figures, being alive and staying alive, as tendencies in the human’s nature, mean being held together at the start of life by an environment and a maternal other such that a self can come together eventually to reach out for contact, even with the moon. Almost all that the human has in development is preceded by dependence upon the almost all of another nature, and so the everything made at the end begins from mutuality and the symbols of separation at the start.

In my study of development, drawing heavily on Winnicott’s revelatory ideas and attitude toward the human condition of dependency, I have composed portraits that aim to treat nothing less than everything, opening from the almost all of human nature of three exemplary figures as questioning ventures into the everything that human development can come to mean. My claim is that to get from almost all to not less than everything is to pass in theory through the thought of dependency. To study development as posing

problems of meaning is to return to the fundamental question of how the human forms a relation in the first place, and how it is from a relation that developmental achievements signify at all. As Winnicott models, and as I have expanded, the study of development raises a particular question concerning narrative and representation: how to formalize the unseen activities of the mind that make from embodied developmental achievements the potential for emotional growth? In other words, developmental theory necessitates a certain representational form as a narrative of subjective change. My question has concerned how we narrate the manifold destinies of a paradox at the heart of the human condition under the assumption that we must create the world so as to discover ourselves there within, and at the same time create the self so as to discover a world waiting to be found. As a scientist, an artist, and a philosopher, Marie Curie, James Joyce, and Jacques Derrida characterize the correlation between narrative depth and the conflicts and achievements of emotional growth. In this way, my dissertation establishes a maxim of its own, echoing Britzman's (2003a) assertion regarding learning: For development to count it must be recounted, which is to say, narrated in relation to the emotional world of fantasy life, symbolization, and the reality of a self who can be doubted and an other who founds belief.

Curie, Joyce, and Derrida each challenge the ways in which representation and development interanimate, each blurring a certain perceived boundary between subject and object, and each called forth by the object relations that bear witness to their desire to be. As seminal figures in twentieth century thought on representations of materiality, modernity, and existence, and more specifically, as figures uniquely implicated in the question of how to distinguish the human's creative efforts from her creative productions,

Curie, Joyce, and Derrida are for my dissertation exemplary cases for thought on the tasks of development as problems of meaning. I am drawn to these three figures for the autobiographical remainders that trickle from the narrative edges of their stories of discovery, whether atomic, stylistic, or epistemological, as though there can be no discovery without the creation—confabulation—of the discovering self. In this way, the dissertation has investigated how portraits of exemplary figures in development help us think with and about our own developmental tasks. To make sense of how the self is subject to her objects, a scientist, artist, and philosopher return the thought of development to a question of dependency and relationality. These figures in development each resist, though in different ways, the conventions of authorial privilege. They each claim their respective inventive projects through creative practices that other the self. The original ideas of a scientist, artist, and philosopher here bear witness to a certain togetherness in human development: “we scientists with those artists who are with us philosophers.” I have discussed the fact of dependence in relation to infantile scenes and achievements in becoming a self through the fantasy of contact with reality, the union made from symbols of separation, and the sacred achievement of doubts about the self, at the heart, respectively, of the science of radioactivity, the art of modernism, and the philosophy of the undecidable. Each of these objects of thought are also reflective modalities for the question of how attending to, taking account of, and witnessing the desire to be through the works that give this desire form characterizes the human’s condition of development.

Expanding the connotative breadth of Winnicott’s (1960) insistence that “there is no such thing as an infant,” since to describe an infant is always already to describe a

relation to others and to transitional phenomena, I have argued that the same is true of the subject of development, repeating Britzman's supposition: "There is no such thing as development unless we can begin thinking with... 'the fact of dependence'" (29). As I argued at the outset of the study, perhaps there is no concept of development, only developmental concepts. Put another way, while there is no such thing as development, there are means of beginning to think with the fact of dependence, and in doing so, as Britzman (2003a) claims in another context, to begin to "textualize identities at their most vulnerable moments" (248). I have discussed the subject of development by studying the textuality of growth and change at the level of representation. The self represents her development in becoming a self and is dependent in this achievement upon the other's capacity to see more than is there.

I have narrated the scientific, artistic, and philosophical aspects of three figures in development to think with the question of how it is from dependence that science, art, and philosophy are called forth not only as categories of thought composed in infancy, but also as the cultural flora of the human's developmental efforts throughout life. Following Marion Milner (2010), I have described development according to the kinds of relationships that are possible between subjects and objects. For instance, the artists in each of us, "by their unreason, by their seeing as a unity things which in objective reality are not the same, by their basic capacity for seeing the world in terms of metaphor, do in fact create the world for the scientist in us to be curious about and seek to understand" (161). The creative psychology of three figures of development are so closely related at the level of psychological activity that the borders between their respective figuralities become difficult to see clearly. The creative scientist is artistic just as the philosopher is



here and there scientific and artistic in turn. But it is not the figural limits that are essential to this study, they are symptoms of the language that here textualizes subjectivity as a developmental touchstone. I have emphasized, rather, inter-subjectivity as constitutive of reflective and identificatory modalities in the first place, how modes of thought are related to the relational conflicts that make growth possible across the life cycle. The artist in us creates the world for the scientist in us to be curious about, and the philosopher in us gives over to this world the doubt that makes belief in it a meaningful endeavor.

My study has explored questions around the tasks of object-relating, integrating, and indwelling, but more importantly around the holding, handling and object-presenting that call these tasks forth. In each case, as the figure of the scientist textualizes the object relations that become a theory of contact with reality, or as the figure of the artist textualizes the integration of the self as the symbolization of separation, or, finally, as the figure of the philosopher textualizes indwelling as a question of the otherness of the self and the selfness of the other, I have traced a line of transition from dependence to creative apperception, and then on to perception and into relative independence. “From which it follows,” Winnicott (1989) concludes, “that objective perception is only a relative term, referring to something that loses meaning as soon as it is out of step with the corresponding process of subjective apperception, or of creativity” (412).

I have proposed a way of approaching the study of development and the thought of its emotional scenes through Winnicott’s paradox that in order to realize the self one must create and discover an object simultaneously. In exploring the fate of this paradox in the development of a self within the creative cultural projects of the adult, I have

argued for a relational sense of self as key to understanding the human capacity to think and to represent the self in development. I have described the elements of this capacity as belonging to the to-and-fro of subjective conception and objective perception as the creation and discovery that typify the life of the mind. At bottom, I see human development as the question of what links the fact of dependence to the wish for creativity.

## **6.2 How to Think Hallucinatorily**

I have explored the way in which theorizing about development means seeing more than is there in a baby's use of a transitional object, and to imagine theory as getting its start from the baby's own conception of the more than is there of the object she creates so as to find. "The fact is," Winnicott (1989) admits, "an external object has no being for you or me except in so far as you or I hallucinate it" (54). The infant theorizes the being of the subjective object in and through the hallucination that its externality is related, and constitutively so, to the inner world. My proposition is that by extension we theorize development from a capacity to think about this hallucination, and perhaps also by thinking hallucinatorily. The study of development is beholden to the creation of both external and internal objects that serve as subject and object of thought, but for the theory to have meaning, to have meaning as the very search for the meaning it has, we must accept rather than resolve the hallucination in our own infancy that posits externality from the inside out. My dissertation analyzes the development of this hallucination as it pertains to the baby's transition from radical dependence and the fantasy of absolute subjectivity to relative independence and a reality that is called objective because shared

with others. In this way, I have narrated creative conflicts in science, art, and philosophy as related to an illusion in infancy that subjective conception and objective perception begin from a point of contact that is hallucinated.

But the theory must also leave room “for everything,” Winnicott (1989) clarifies in a paper on thinking in child development, “including the not yet known and the not yet envisaged” (152). “There is no alternative,” Winnicott argues, “I must *think* this thing *out*, without hoping to *think it through*” (152). Thinking is part of the mechanism by which the infant tolerates the anxiety of instinctual life, the illusion of independence, the frustration of waiting, and the disillusionment that comes from frustration—thinking is the symbolic effort to both contain and express this. Thinking begets the baby’s theories of creation and discovery, of fantasized reality, of integration, of psycho-somatic indwelling and also returns the adult to her relational mind in fantasies of contact with external reality, in the forms of symbolic union between self and other, and in her doubts about the self. There is no hope, in the last analysis, of thinking things through on the subject of human development, but perhaps this is precisely where our theory of development can begin, in the end, as a reaching out for thought from the inside. To quote Winnicott once again:

Here we are reaching out for words, reaching, thinking, and trying to be logical, and including a study of the unconscious which affords a vast extension of the range of logic. But at the same time we need to be able to reach out for symbols and to create imaginatively and in preverbal language; we need to be able to think hallucinatorily (157).

Theorizing development consigns the givenness of the object to a practice of thinking that goes beyond knowledge. To think about development is in a way to begin by not knowing about it. The baby's development, for instance, is thought out with a "going concern" by the maternal other, accepting rather than resolving a degree of unknowing between she and the baby on the question of whether an object was created or found. To think this relation is to open within developmental theory a space for the superfluity of creativity, a space for that which is yet to come but that can come at all only insofar as no resolution is reached in advance as to its fate. The relation between the fact of dependence and the potential for creativity is the thought of development as a theory of the invisible, a gap between an experience and what it can mean. Is that which we call development otherwise than the unseen activity of this relation? Ideas about development become our developmental ideas when we think the potentiality of a gap between dependence and creativity "as between two curtains that move slightly in the breeze" (Winnicott, 1992a, 172).

Marion Milner (1987) describes the psychological reality of creativity with a similar turn to thinking gaps in subjective experience, as opposed to resorting to the concepts of causality. Creativity cannot be planned for concretely and directly, as Milner notes, "but what one could do was plan the gap into which the new thing was to fit. If it was new knowledge one was looking for one could plan the question, frame the question, work on deliberately planning the empty space into which the new knowledge was to fit" (121). To think human development as a relationship between dependence and creativity one can't plan the affective ties that lead, for instance, from doubts about the self to one or another style of philosophical eminence. Instead, one can frame the questions that give

space for thought on the nature of this enigmatic relationality. Theorizing, then, as Milner (1987) understands it, “is a making of new bottles for the continually distilled new wine of developing experience” (153). In this sense, theory is an objectification of developing experience within a thinking practice. And yet we should at the same time be suspicious of representations of development that attribute to it objective quantities. After all, the wine of developing experience is consumed just like any other wine. And while certain wines, like certain experiences, improve according to how long the bottle can be waited with, turned over on the shelf and in the mind, no wine is enjoyed fully until it is consumed and rendered objective no longer.

I have described the objectivity of our theories of development in the way Winnicott (1989) proposes thought on mutuality in child development: “It is necessary,” he claims, “to be able to think of a baby as beginning to have some capacity for objectivity, and yet being generally unable to objectify, with a forward and backward movement in this area of development” (254). It is likewise necessary to be able to think a theory of development as having some capacity for objectivity, and yet being generally unable to objectify, with forward and backward movement in this area of thought. The theory of development can only end up on the way to objectivity if it can begin from the thought of the baby herself on the way to objectivity. The point, then, is not here a question of outcomes, derived from scientific or artistic or philosophical thought, but the question of what can be said about *the way* to objectivity itself, about what it signifies, since the way is always, as it were, subjective.

“In this way,” Winnicott concludes, “life is an inverted pyramid and the point on which the inverted pyramid rests is a *paradox*” (285). My study imagines the role of

subjectivity on the way to objectivity as an inverted pyramid resting on a paradox.

Ultimately, just as the maternal other “lends her unity to the child, and under her aegis the child is a whole person,” so too do I here lend narrative unity to a theory of development, where under the aegis of thought on exemplary figures the theory can be used as whole (Winnicott, 1989, 565).

### **6.3 “Education Will Be Regulated by This Necessary Evil”**

My study returned frequently to the question of beginnings, to infancy, and to Winnicott’s formulations of the meaningful problems of subjectivity in developmental theory as drawn from a fundamental question: “Is an infant a phenomenon that can be isolated, at least hypothetically, for observation and conceptualization?” (Winnicott, 1989, 73). Winnicott suggests, of course, that the answer is no. “When we look back through our analyses of children and adults we tend to see mechanisms rather than infants,” he elaborates:

But if we look at an infant we see an infant in care. The process of integration, and of separating out, of getting to live in the body and of relating to objects, these are all matters of maturation and achievement. Conversely, the state of not being separated, of not being integrated, of not being related to body functions, of not being related to objects, this state is very real; we must believe in these states that belong to immaturity. The problem is: How does that infant survive such conditions? (73-74)

The dissertation has endeavored to begin the work of turning this question upon the entire range of human development, that is to say, upon every age, from childhood to adolescence, to adulthood and into old age: What do we see if we look at a self in development? Do we see a self in care? An adolescent or adult in care? Relative care for relative independence? To ask how the infant survives the conditions that belong to immaturity, conditions which call on our belief in them, is to ask how separation, integration and the feeling of being related to the body and to objects are also matters in development that belong to the adult, since if there can be an after-childhood at all it is inescapably subject to the child's meaningful conflicts.

Here the figures of the scientist, artist and philosopher have each attended to ideas around how care in the development of thought and self is related to conceptions of what the self lacks. As Winnicott notes, the baby is not a unit, lacks unit status, and is therefore cared for, believed in as a unit up until the time the illusion can go both ways and the infant can begin to believe in her own unity. I have argued that the two ways of this illusion are indispensable to development. The self is always in need of belief from others as to her unit status. This belief as a kind of care is a use made of the almost all that we have of our human nature. I have narrated the various creative demands of this belief upon subjectivity and what it might mean to stretch the claims of dependency into our understanding of the cultural pursuits of science, art, and philosophy. Stories of development are stories of a self in care. The adult, too, can no longer be envisioned simply as an isolated phenomenon.

Derrida (1987) turns to the discipline of education to think the human's condition of being-in-dependence as a question of what is lacking: "All the organization of, and all the time spent in, education will be regulated by this necessary evil: 'supply...[what]...is lacking'" (146). As Winnicott so diligently brings into view, the necessary evil that regulates education is inherited from the developing experience of mutuality and separation that precedes it, between maternal other and baby. To supply what is lacking is also a developmental proposition, however evil, and its education depends precisely on what we mean when we use the word care to describe what is lacking. My study of development intends toward the provisional conclusion that education is also a defense of the mind, that pedagogy is a relation of care, that pedagogy holds the fact of dependency, and that it too carries in the challenges of creating what is there to be found.

The scientist, the artist, and the philosopher are cases for thought on how we get from the supplement of care to the plenitude of creativity as a problem of the subjective meanings of development for the development of subjectivity. "Creativity," argues Winnicott (1990b), "is then the doing that arises out of being...Impulse may be at rest, but when the word 'doing' becomes appropriate, then already there is creativity" (39). My assumption is that being always means *being in care*, from the start, and so when doing can refer to being creatively alive, we take for granted a situation of care and the necessary evil, which never gives up its necessity, of supplying what is lacking. The gap we plan for in thought on the



creative potential that development gives over to our human condition of education is a theory of creativity that begins from a situation of care.

Marie Curie, James Joyce, and Jacques Derrida figure the way in which a relationship of creativity in care, and in theory, might be lived and expressed in the cultural projects that characterize the life of the mind. If creativity begins from the other's belief in the self as a being lacking, lending to the self her unit status, and if this belief is expressed in techniques of care that supply what is lacking, which is to say, that value the immaturity that makes maturity an achievement and also an escape—plateau and pitfall—then the study human development is research, precisely, in the education of our capacities and techniques of care. For Winnicott (1990b), “creativity...is the retention throughout life of something that belongs properly to infant experience: the ability to create the world” (40). The something that is retained, as Winnicott expands in his later essays, is also a feeling that accompanies the ability to create the world, to feel that change implicates both the being and the doing of a self, both a lack and the supplement of care for it. I have argued that in the discovery of radioactivity, the symbol formation of literary masterpieces, and the doubt that deconstructs entire traditions of thought, there is at work a double statement: a world is created, and there is a feeling, forged in care, that the world could only have been created because it was there already.

“We are now in the position to look at creative living,” writes Winnicott (1990b), “and in so doing to use a consistent theory” (51). “The theory,” he concludes, “allows us to see some of the reasons why the subject of creative living is inherently difficult” (51). When we see an infant in care and imagine the paradox

of a world found and created in infantile hands through transitional phenomena, we are tying together the parallel lines of development and creativity while at the same time planning for a gap that will forever keep a distance between them. If we can use a consistent theory of development to look at creative living, and to look at dependence and care as constitutive of living creatively, then perhaps we can accept without resolving the inherent difficulty of our subject.

“The fact is that what we create is already there,” Winnicott (1990b) repeats, “but the creativeness lies in the way we get at perception through conception and apperception” (52). So the question of what we see when we look at our difficult subject of development and creative living is supplemented by the questions of what we can imagine and conceive of, of what we understand by our concept of the self, what we apperceive: almost all, or not less than everything. We get at a perception of development in theory by conceiving of our dependence and by reflecting upon a self in the care of others. “So when I look at the clock,” Winnicott clarifies, “I create the clock, but I am careful not to see clocks except just where I already know there is one” (52). “Please do not turn down this piece of absurd unlogic,” he entreats, “but look at it and use it” (52). So let us look: When we look at each other, do we create scientists, artists, and philosophers, and are we careful to see them only when we already know they are there, which is to say, everywhere and in everyone?

#### **6.4 Creativity in Dependence**

When Marion Milner (1987) looked back upon her autobiographical study of the terms of psychic creativity to see what was there to be found, she discovered she had been led to “becoming aware of a revolution in [the human]’s attitude to...thinking” (164). Included in the gradual increase of interest and attention to the inner world was a radical transformation in the awareness of a relationship between thought and creativity. The revolution had to do with seeing in categories of thought the creative modalities and emotional conflicts of human development. Personality, then, as Milner explored, is not made from the revelation of an inalienable essence at the core of being, but from a development in thought and feeling on the tide and wind of the experiences of a self that comes together in the arms of an other. The revolution in the attitude to thinking also means that development becomes a self-questioning narrative, the self is created and found, both, and is subject in development to the social relations and material conditions of historical, cultural, and political fields of thought. What Milner found was that creativity could be said to emerge from an emotional situation between thought and things, and that thinking, likewise, emerges from the creative effort to imagine the difference between the objects we find and the feelings we create for them.

Winnicott (1989) refers to a related revolution in psychoanalysis in which analysts turned “their unique belief in the significance of details...to look at dependence” (251). Development, whether of scientific, artistic, or philosophical thought, or simply the development of a self in infancy, could not for long sustain the myth of an individual ego at both ends of subjective transformations. Inevitably, a certain dependence and mutuality in development had to be believed in and

thought about and theorized. My dissertation wagers that it is also inevitable that such a revolution can go further still, that an analytic belief in the significance of details can be used to look at dependence leading from child development everywhere else, coming later under the banner of the adult's cultural experience as forms of dependence and care that supplement scientific, artistic, and philosophical thought.

We also study development so as to shine a particular light on the creativity that attributes subjective meanings to objective changes in material and emotional circumstances, to study the conditions of possibility for creative relationships to existence and to others. "Being creative in art form or in philosophy," Winnicott (1990b) remarks, "depends very much on the study of all that exists already, and the study of the milieu is a clue to the understanding and appreciation of every artist" (53). Marie Curie, James Joyce, and Jacques Derrida here compose a milieu, cultural figures in development as a clue to understanding and appreciating the place of creativity and its psychical reality in the inherently difficult subject of embodied development and emotional growth. These exemplary figures situate thinking around the concept of creativity in the gap between being and doing, dependence and care, between the almost all of our nature and the everything that makes up the self, including the other.

Building from his assertion that there is no such thing as a baby, Winnicott (1989) compares the analysis of infantile development to that of a work of art, asking: "Can one be sure that the capacity to appreciate the work of art fully will not be destroyed by the search-light that is played upon the picture?" (251). My

study extends the analogy: Our capacity to appreciate the work of developing into a self, developing as a self, and developing from our sense of self, can also be measured against the question of our capacity to appreciate what we're looking at, and of whether we think we can see a self at all, or the creativity of its works. Do we see a self in care? The fact of dependence gives this thought over to the study of human development and to the potential for further revolutions in our attitude towards thinking.

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